The Girl Scouts and the Open Road

MARGARET VANDERCOOK

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THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

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THE GIRL SCOUTS SERIES

The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing
The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest
The Girl Scouts of the Round Table

Some One Was Opening the Door

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The Girl Scouts and the Open Road

By
MARGARET VANDERCOOK
Author of "The Ranch Girls Series," "The Red Cross Girls Series," "Stories About Camp Fire Girls," etc.

Illustrated

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CHAPTER I

THE THICKET

THE laurel and rhododendron thicket extended as far as the eye could reach.

This afternoon in the late sunshine the foliage showed silver and gray; the flowers having long since faded, the seed-pods were slowly maturing.

"Do you think we are lost in a trackless wilderness, Dorothy? I don't believe any human being ever penetrated this thicket before, and certainly no Girl Scout."

The girl's voice revealed a pretense of gaiety.

Before replying her companion stumbled; after regaining her balance she stood a moment swaying uncertainly.

"You are braver than I am, Tory, if you can still even attempt to appear cheerful. In spite of our Girl Scout training I am about to give up hope. When shall we find a trail? We lost our way before twelve o'clock and

it is now—I wonder what hour it is? My watch has stopped."

Both girls glanced upward toward the sky.

"I believe it must be between four and five o'clock. Don't be discouraged. Try to have faith, Dorothy, it is a much stronger attribute than hope and affords one greater help. Once we are safely out of this thicket there is sure to be a trail on the farther side leading down the mountain. If only Ann Craig were with us, she could supply us with knowledge as well as faith."

The two girls were dressed in Scout uniforms bearing the insignia of their troop, an eagle's wing.

They moved on, now walking with increasing slowness and evidence of fatigue. They were compelled to choose their steps warily, since the ground underfoot was a network of tangled roots and branches. With their hands they thrust aside the heavy foliage which everywhere impeded their movement, not daring to look ahead save when they were compelled to pause for a few moments' rest.

In their hearts they realized that whatever the degree of their exhaustion and depression they must not confess even to each other, since confession might mean defeat.

Tory, who was frailer and smaller than her companion, began humming a Girl Scout song of the outdoors. She had red-gold hair, brown eyes and a skin of a clear, healthy pallor.

The song was not a success. Her lips were too parched and dry. She dared not waste her strength. She and Dorothy McClain were strangers in the Cumberland mountains. During the summer holiday of "The Girl Scouts in Mystery Valley," they had been told many stories of men and women, natives to these mountains, who disappeared and were never seen again. Unless they could reach the end of the thicket this must be their own fate. Obviously no one had traveled this way before.

"Dorothy!" Tory's voice was weaker, her lips paler. She had just discovered a hole in her water bottle and that it was completely empty.

Her companion, a few feet ahead, made her way back. Asking no questions, she extended her own bottle, but when Tory had moistened her lips they realized that their supply of water was now almost gone, and thirst is ever harder for the lost traveler to endure than hunger.

They trudged on, a half mile, a mile, having lost all ability to estimate or even to guess at the distance.

Three days before from the "House by the Granite Ledge" overlooking Mystery Valley the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing with their Scout Captain and guide had started for their journey along the open road. Before reaching the open road in the blue-grass region of Kentucky they planned to ascend and descend the trail over Firescald Mountain in the heart of the Cumberlands.

Only this morning the plan held all its original charm.

No one of the travelers had been ill or disagreeable. The weather had been perfect, not an hour of rain, no mountain mists, save in the early morning when the dawn colors turned the mists into ascending clouds of opal and rose.

With his old coach Jeb Tolliver had lumbered on ahead. If one grew weary a half hour or an hour's rest inside the coach was sufficient.

"I do wish Jeb had not turned back," Dorothy murmured aloud. She was not speaking to her companion, she was not aware that her words had been uttered aloud. Some

time before they had ceased all effort at conversation. Besides, Tory was at present half a dozen yards away. "Yesterday of course the trail grew too steep for Jeb to manage his old wagon, but he might have continued on horseback or on foot. We were foolish to think we could follow the trail without him." Unconsciously Dorothy sighed. She was ashamed of her growing weakness and gloom. Stronger and a few months older than Tory Drew, she believed that she had shown less courage and fortitude. And she was a country doctor's daughter with half a dozen brothers and had spent a great part of her life out of doors.

"The fault after all was Tory's and mine," she continued aloud. "We should never have dropped behind to talk of Katherine Moore and of Lance, even if Kara is Tory's dearest friend and Lance my own best beloved brother. One, two, three, four, five, six, nearly seven hours since we lost the trail, lost the trail!"

Suddenly the girl ceased. She had heard the sound of her own voice and realized that she was speaking aloud and repeating her own words.

Dorothy McClain was a tall, fair girl with slender shoulders and an athletic figure. Her

hair was a gold brown and her eyes gray blue. Ordinarily she had a bright color, but this afternoon her color had vanished. A year before her brother and Katherine Moore had gone to Europe with Katherine's guardian, Lance to study music, Kara to try to recover from a fall during the holiday encampment of "The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest."

At this moment Dorothy placed her hand as a shield before her eyes. Dared she trust her own vision? Was it possible that she beheld about a quarter or half mile away the shadow of green branches higher overhead than the growth of this everlasting tangle of thicket. If only she and Tory Drew might reach the beginning of a woods their way would be far easier. In the first place they could lie down on a little clearing and rest, in the second place there might be a chance of discovering a stream, although water was not very abundant in the Cumberland hills. And greatest of all, perchance a trail might be found among the trees. Men and women must now and then traverse the forests for wood and game and fish. No one who knew the mountains ever set foot within a laurel thicket. She would not, however, speak of her hope to Tory for the present, fearing disappointment.

More resolutely and unconsciously with increasing speed she pushed her way on ahead.

Had she looked behind she might have become aware that a change had taken place in her companion.

Tory's valor, her fight to maintain not alone her own faith and courage, but her companion's in adversity, had passed. No longer was she endeavoring to deceive herself. Why suppress the truth? Hopelessly and for all time she and Dorothy were lost in a tangled wilderness from which there was no escape. In time, it was true, some one might discover them. How many days, weeks? And her own strength would not hold out for hours.

Dorothy was gaining upon her. She could not maintain the struggle. Yet she would not call out to ask aid. Better Dorothy should seek safety alone.

Tory's mind also was becoming confused. Every few feet she staggered now and clutched at the heavy branches. Holding them back and letting go too swiftly they struck and bruised her face and arms and body. Her head felt dizzy. She was overheated from her long struggle and the rays of the late summer sun beating down for so many hours almost directly upon her. The mountains were sup-

posed to be cool, but since early noon to-day the warmth had been intense. Where could she find strength and healing?

Tory thought of their Scout Captain, Memory Frean, who had been her uncle Richard Fenton's friend so many years before. Memory Frean, her own Patrol of Girl Scouts, Donald McClain, Dorothy's brother, Geoffry Burnett, who was to accompany their walking party on his way to college in Berea, Kentucky, doubtless were searching Firescald Mountain at this moment, seeking to find the lost. There was no consolation, but deepening regret in this idea. Were there no lines in her Scouting book intending to bring strength to the weak, courage to the timid, faith to the doubting?

Unexpectedly Tory's mental confusion lessened. Already she was calmer. What were the words trying to form themselves in her tired brain?

"Our heart is not turned back; neither our steps gone out of the way. No, not when Thou hast smitten us into the place of dragons." The lines were from one of the great Psalms. Tory smiled. Why should their danger appear less?

"We are not in the 'place of dragons.'

After all, only wildcats and a few bears inhabit these hills."

She was smiling when her foot again caught in a tangle of knarled roots and twigs. As she struck the ground she was no longer afraid, instead there was an instant when she was aware of being grateful for the descending darkness and peace.

An hour after when finally Tory opened her eyes she discovered that she was alone. Still she was not frightened. She could see the sky above her between the green branches of a tree. Thrusting out her hand she touched, not the leaves of the laurel or the gnarled roots and trunks, but the sweet, warm earth.

She was out of the tangled copse and by what method this seeming miracle had been achieved she did not question. She was not even particularly tired. A dull pain in her head troubled her only slightly.

Five minutes passed, then ten. Was she hearing the most beautiful sound in nature, the sound of running water, or was this only an impression because of the strength of her own desire?

Tory closed her eyes again. Some one was coming toward her. She realized that Dorothy McClain had gone on further to seek assistance and was now returning alone.

The touch of fresh cool water on her forehead and lips was more comforting than any human aid.

"Dorothy, you miracle worker, tell me everything that has taken place since I fainted or fell! I don't know what occurred, I do believe you managed all alone to carry or drag me out of the thicket."

Tory suddenly sat up. The movement was too abrupt, for a sharper pain in her head informed her that she must have hurt herself seriously in falling, but the smile of relief on Dorothy's face was sufficient compensation.

"You are wearier than I am. Do please sit down and forgive me, if it is possible, for being such a nuisance. When I think of how I preached to you! Perhaps it is preaching, not pride, that goes before a fall."

Tory was like herself, the old gaiety and courage.

Dorothy McClain had been through a dark hour and was glad to drop on the ground beside her friend.

"Yes, I'll rest, but only for a few moments, Tory. And I'll tell you what has happened, because I have good news. I was rushing on ahead of you because I felt pretty sure that I had found a place where the laurel copse

ended. I did not dare speak of it for fear we should both be disappointed. However, the idea gave me more pep and energy than I had before. And I was right. I came to a spot at last where there was no doubt there was a forest of trees and real, solid earth, not a tangle of vines. I shouted 'hurrah', I believe. Anyhow I turned, but you were not to be seen. Of course I rushed back, calling and crying, I am afraid. As a Girl Scout of several years' standing I should not confess this, but I was so tired and so nervous I felt as if the earth had swallowed you up and I was alone in no man's land. Then I saw a shadow on the ground. Finding you, I carried you somehow to this grove of trees. As well for you that you were unconscious, because I don't suppose I was gentle! Part of the time I must have hauled you as if you were a bundle of old clothes too heavy to lift. I left you here after a few minutes and went on. No, I was not afraid, Tory darling. I discovered a trail and knew that in these mountains a trail always leads finally to running water."

Impulsively Dorothy McClain, who was the least demonstrative of persons, leaned over and kissed the other girl's white lips.

"Tory, the trail brought me not only to a creek—crik, the mountaineers say—but to a tiny log cabin a few yards beyond. A mysterious fact is that the cabin is empty, although I believe some one has been living there within the past week."

Tory put up her hand to her temple.

"I can go with you at once, I seem to have hurt my head when I fell, but I don't think the wound is serious. Besides, your good news, Dorothy, makes one strong again. Of course the cabin has an owner who may return now at any time. Surely we can find something to eat and remain there over night."

Making another sudden effort to arise, Tory felt an annoying return of the past faintness and knew that Dorothy's arm was placed about her waist.

"I'll see if there is anything I can do for you later. Now we must go on if possible. Darkness is almost upon us."

Tory nodded. In another moment she was upon her feet and the two of them moving on slowly. Once only did they permit themselves to rest; then they did not sit down by the water's edge, but instead stretched out flat upon the ground, dropping their hands into its cooling depth.

"Does He not water the furrows of the earth and sendest rain into the little valley thereof: Thou makest it soft with drops of rain and blesseth the increase of it."

Tory Drew laughed softly. She had dampened the bandage she found in her Scout knapsack and was binding it about her own temples.

"No, I am not delirious, Dorothy, don't look so alarmed. I was quoting a Psalm when I fell and now I am merely going on with my quotation. I believe I can see the log cabin! Now I find it is so near I shall not rest again until after we arrive."

In this world certain scenes make impressions upon us that neither years nor manifold experiences wipe out. Neither Dorothy McClain nor Tory Drew would ever forget the tiny hut with its background of sombre hills. Before the door was a cleared space of perhaps a dozen yards and around this grew a hedge of wild roses transplanted from the lower slopes of the hill.

"I'll knock again and perhaps some one will hear me this time. Tory, will you wait here?" Dorothy suggested.

Tory preferred to accompany her to the closed door.

CHAPTER II

ALONE

THERE was no reply, not to repeated knockings.

Suddenly the angry barking of a dog broke the stillness.

Tory was absurdly afraid of dogs, but Dorothy McClain had no more fear of them than the average boy.

The dog that now appeared at one side of the cabin was a hunting dog, a beautiful creature of cream and golden brown, with intelligent, gentle eyes, who recognized at once that the two girls were not ordinary intruders. When Dorothy spoke and held out her hand he came fawning to her feet as if grateful for the interruption to his solitude.

"Some one must be living here, for this dog is absolute proof of the fact. I shall make an effort to push open the door," Dorothy announced authoritatively, observing that Tory's reserve of strength was now finally used up and that she must have rest and food before they could travel another yard.

Stronger than the average girl, the door gave way so promptly to her push that Dorothy was almost precipitated headlong into the cabin.

Her surmise was correct, the single room was empty, although undoubtedly some one recently had occupied it.

By the fireplace stood a pile of logs and a basket of chips and pine cones. The room was comparatively clean. Greatest boon of all, Dorothy discovered almost in the first glance a meagre supply of food. A shelf ran along one side of the wall and upon this shelf stood several cans and paper bags, while beneath hung a saucepan and a frying pan.

A cot in the corner was covered with a pair of army blankets.

Tory Drew had entered the cabin. She now stood staring about her as if scarcely aware of where she was or of what was expected of her.

Without any discussion of the question, Dorothy led her to the couch, and when she had dropped down upon it removed her kit-bag and shoes and with greater difficulty her coat. Tory had almost ceased from sheer exhaustion to be able to render any assistance.

A half hour later Dorothy had the fire burn-

ing, grateful beyond words to the thrifty householder who had left the convenient supply of wood. A little later she was pouring a cup of warm soup between Tory's lips. To her intense anxiety she was beginning to be aware that the wound Tory had received was more serious than either one of them had dreamed. There was no open wound or cut, only a deep bruise above the temple that was slowly darkening. Worst feature of all, Tory was slightly delirious, with only brief flashes of consciousness.

Dorothy McClain was a physician's daughter as well as a Girl Scout. She appreciated that there was nothing she could do for her friend at present save to keep her quiet and in so far as possible allay her fever. Her temperature was not high at the moment but would in all probability increase during the night.

Had she the opportunity, Dorothy might have thought of her own fatigue; she had been sufficiently conscious of it a few hours before, but now could only think of Tory.

A battered tin bucket rewarded a moment's search. She immediately left the house for water, realizing that Tory's hands and head must be bathed during the night and that she

must see that she drank as much water as she had strength to swallow.

As she left the cabin, even in the midst of her anxiety and loneliness, Dorothy paused for an instant, overcome by the lofty grandeur and beauty of her strange surroundings.

The sun had gone down behind the hills and only the afterglow remained. The higher mountains beyond formed a rim of blue so deep that it was almost purple. In the woods the screech owls were calling and the whip-poor-wills beginning their plaintive lament. There were other and less familiar noises. As she hurried on her errand Dorothy was increasingly grateful for the shelter of the little cabin.

Upon her return she was wise enough to eat and drink.

How long Tory would be ill or when they would be discovered she had no way of knowing. The owner of the cabin, man or woman, or both, might return at any moment or be gone for days or weeks. Their own party would doubtless scour the mountain until they were found, but it might be necessary that they seek experienced aid.

By and by Dorothy sat down by the fire a few feet from Tory's couch. She would

keep the fire burning through the night, as she had found no candle or oil and had no other light, save the light of the stars that shone through the many open spaces in the cabin roof.

The moon would not rise until after midnight.

Dorothy felt she must not dare to sleep, for Tory might need her at any instant. Moreover, she must be awake to explain their presence if the owner of the cabin returned. There was not one chance in a hundred that a prowler in the mountains would light upon the trail that had led them hither, but even for this Dorothy endeavored to be prepared.

An old rifle stood in a corner of the room. Fortunately her brother Donald had taught her how to load and unload a gun and also to shoot at clay pigeons.

Dorothy remembered to-night how often she had protested that she would never fire at any living thing. Well, one never knew what demands destiny might make! She would shoot if necessary to save Tory. She might also be compelled to hunt game, for the provisions in the cabin were perilously scant.

During the first hours of the night, notwithstanding her excellent intentions, Dorothy

fell often into a light slumber. She was glad of the comforting presence of the dog. Tory's return to consciousness became less and less frequent; she felt alone in the world with only the firelight and the starshine overhead.

Dreaming occasionally, she was not always sure whether the dreams were waking or sleeping ones.

The cabin consisted of only one room with the stone fireplace in the center. On the left side of the room a steep ladder led up to what looked to be a half story that might prove a storeroom or a sleeping room. Such an arrangement was common in the primitive mountain cabins, where father and mother slept in the large room that served as kitchen, living room, and dining room, while the children were stored away in an attic chamber under the roof.

In the morning Dorothy meant to explore, when daylight would make all further exploration simpler.

Waking two or three times under the impression that Tory had stirred and was needing her, Dorothy heard mysterious sounds in this dim chamber. She was nervous over the noises, although perfectly aware that the room was probably inhabited by squirrels who were storing away supplies for winter.

Before daylight Dorothy arose and for the fifth time bathed Tory's face and hands. Try as she might to persuade herself that her friend's fever was less, she found this self-deception out of the question.

Oftentimes during the earlier months of the summer their Scout Captain, Memory Frean, had insisted that Tory was overexerting herself with the long mountain climbs and the repeated trips into Mystery Valley. Her present condition might be due partly to strain. If they were in for a long, lonely siege Dorothy asked herself all the demands, spiritual, mental and physical, that would be made upon her?

She sat down by the edge of Tory's cot, leaning her head against it. The nearness brought a degree of consolation. The dog changed his position and came and lay down at her feet. The gun stood against one side of the chimney, the fire was burning low but would last until morning.

This time Dorothy did not fall asleep as she had earlier in the night. She was rested and her brain had become more active. She had not given a great deal of thought to their Scout Captain and the other Girl Scouts and to her brother, Donald McClain, who was

traveling with them. At first she had been too full of Tory's need and her own. Now she could vision them, how worn out and discouraged they must be to-night after searching for them since before noon.

If any one of their own party found them, Dorothy believed in Ann Craig, the young girl from Mystery Valley who had lived with the Girl Scouts and Miss Frean in the House by the Granite Ledge during the early part of the summer. Ann loved her mountains and knew them. She was returning to spend the winter in Westhaven with the Scout Captain, Memory Frean. In an emergency calling for physical courage and prowess one could trust Ann.

Again Dorothy felt a profound desire for sleep returning and this time did not resist the desire. As a result of her fever Tory was sleeping more deeply. In a few hours day would be upon them.

When Dorothy awakened a bar of sunlight lay across her face.

Walking to the door, she opened it to allow the fresh mountain air to sweep through the cabin. The dog bounded past her to hunt his own breakfast. Upon her couch Tory stirred and spoke indistinctly.

Dorothy stood quietly studying her surroundings by the light of a new day. Could any human being choose to live amid such beauty and such loneliness? So far as they were concerned she and Tory had no choice at present. Surely the owner of the cabin would return some time during the day! She could not endure the thought of passing another such night with Tory so ill and all the world of people she knew and loved so far away.

"I feel as if Tory and I had been transported to one of the mountains in the moon and left there to look after ourselves," Dorothy murmured aloud. She then turned and set about the day's tasks.

CHAPTER III

DISCOVERY

A WEEK had passed. It was now a little before high noon.

A girl was wandering slowly and cautiously through a forest of trees with a rifle slung over her shoulder and carrying a bunch of freshly killed game. She was wearing a Girl Scout uniform, shabby and faded and looking as if it had seen hard service.

The week through which she had just lived had altered Dorothy McClain. Her face showed older and graver, the lines were thinner. Responsibility had been thrust too suddenly upon her. Circumstances had demanded that she display the resourcefulness and a tirelessness greater than she would have considered herself capable of had the test not been made.

After seven days of illness, with only occasional flashes of consciousness, Tory Drew had not recovered. Better she was undoubtedly; her fever had grown perceptibly less,

yet still she was unable to sit up or to care for herself in any fashion.

Leaving Tory alone in the cabin was a source of deep anxiety, and nothing save necessity would have induced Dorothy to go so far away as she was at the present moment. Their food supply had grown alarmingly small. Indeed, nothing at all remained of the supply they had found in the cabin save a few scant handfuls of corn meal and a single can of soup. This last must be preserved for Tory. The day might come when she could not go forth to hunt or fish, or, notwithstanding her effort, her luck might fail.

Fortunately to-day fate had been kind. Dorothy had sufficient game to carry them through another forty-eight hours. And who could tell at what hour relief would arrive?

Dorothy stood resting for a moment in a small space between two giant forest trees. At a short distance away she could hear her dog hunting about among the underbrush for his own game. She would whistle in a few moments for his return, since they must be starting back for the cabin as soon as possible.

The noonday sun shone bright between the trees. The intense brightness slightly dimmed the clearness of Dorothy's vision. She was

not gazing at the scenery. In this past week she had grown weary of this everlasting "sea of mountains." She also had grown weary of asking herself why no one had penetrated to the cabin where she and Tory were awaiting rescue. Certainly she was convinced that the search for them must still be going on. It would be tireless, endless. The Scout Captain, the Girl Scouts and her own brother, Donald, would never cease their effort—not until they completely lost hope.

"Lost hope!" This thought had not occurred to her before. Yet of course in time if they were not discovered they would be given up for lost. And then?

Had she not resolutely put away from her the thought of her father's anxiety? In a family of six brothers she was the only daughter. Nor had she permitted herself to think of Tory Drew's uncle and aunt, Mr. Richard Fenton and Miss Victoria Fenton. Tory's artist father and her stepmother were in Europe, and for a little time longer would be spared the news of Tory's disappearance.

Dorothy moved. She was not aware of whether her movement was due to the fact that she intended to dispel at once the useless trend of ideas which seemed to be taking

possession of her, now that her hunting was over, or whether some sight or sound had aroused her wandering attention.

Certainly she at once looked straight in front of her and almost directly overhead.

Afterwards she remained utterly silent and transfixed, her lips actually pursed into an O. She had contemplated at the same instant whistling to her dog.

At the end of a branch of a tree which swayed slightly from the weight, and only a few feet above her head, a giant cat crouched ready to spring. The eyes glaring at her were brilliant jewels, two deep yellow topazes. The creature was not an ordinary cat, the forelegs were shorter and the body heavier, the short fur stood upright.

There could be no mistake. Dorothy had been warned that there were wildcats in the fastnesses of these mountains. Ann Craig had described them to her more than once during the summer spent by "The Girl Scouts in Mystery Valley." In an idle moment and in company with half a dozen other persons she once expressed a desire to see one of the wild animals so frequently discussed and so seldom discovered in the heart of the Cumberlands.

At this instant Dorothy felt a shuddering sense of her own stupidity and lack of valor.

There was a hypnotic influence in the pair of gleaming circles, and in the taut strength of the stooping animal. Horror seized her, and she felt limp and ill and unable to stir. Also she realized that any movement on her part might be the signal for a spring. Almost she could feel the clutch of those ugly brutal claws on her shoulders and realize that they were tearing through the khaki of her uniform into her very skin.

Well, why not? She had no strength to resist further misfortune. She would not return to Tory Drew wounded and maimed. Tory might be able to care for herself. She was better but assuredly she could not look after any one else. Still Tory would be alone. And the loneliness had been the thing that had tried her own nerves most during the past week. Actually if Tory had been well, there would have been hours when together they could have enjoyed their pioneer life. Certainly no Girl Scout training had ever met a completer test! "Honor, loyalty, usefulness, a friend to all and a sister to every other Girl Scout."

As the Scout requirements repeated them-

selves in Dorothy McClain's mind, each word was like the tick of a clock. Slowly and with perfect quiet and caution she raised her rifle to her shoulder and taking careful and steadfast aim, fired. She never had intended to be a coward, never really thought of leaving Tory alone to whatever fate had in store.

As her finger pulled the trigger she felt calm and assured, and the following second the great cat sprawled dead at her feet. Not in vain had been this past week's hunting experience when Dorothy believed every shot must count. The supply of ammunition she had found in the cabin was large, but then who could guess for how long a period it would be required?

In a sudden attack of weakness Dorothy sank down upon the ground, not yet daring to lay her hand upon the splendid ugly creature she so lately had destroyed. During this week, when necessity had driven her, not once had she failed to suffer regret as well as pleasure at the death of each living thing her rifle had brought down.

Now she was no longer alone. At the sound of her shot, her dog had rushed from cover. He was now standing nearby with ears and tail erect, as surprised as his new mistress by her unexpected quarry.

"Come, we must get back now as soon as possible, Tory will be needing something to eat," Dorothy suggested, speaking in a perfectly conversational tone and knowing the dog would understand. One fact that puzzled her among a number of others was how the owner of their cabin could have left so beautiful and valuable a dog to perish or return to a state of wildness? One or the other must happen if the dog remained alone in the mountains all winter.

Of late Dorothy had given up the idea that their unknown hosts or host would return home. She was fairly convinced, however, that the last resident of the cabin had been a man. There was nothing to indicate the presence of two persons in the cabin, but a good deal of evidence, including the rifle and ammunition, of a man's occupancy.

She rose to her feet and stood hesitating, the dog close beside her, his silken cream and gold body pressed against her legs. Should she or should she not bear home her prey? The wildcat was heavy and she was carrying as much as she could manage with any pleasure at present. Still she had the hunter's vanity!

Then an idea occurred to her. Picking up the wildcat, Dorothy gave it to the dog, who

was accustomed to obeying and would carry the animal back to the cabin. If possible she wished to preserve the skin. Her brother Donald and the Girl Scouts might doubt her prowess when they were reunited unless she possessed the actual evidence of her skill.

Dorothy actually hummed a little tune as she drew nearer the log cabin. She was sure of her landmarks, no more straying from a trail into the mountain wilderness as long as she lived!

She beheld the smoke ascending cheerfully from the chimney and hoped that Tory had slept during her absence and would be stronger and more like herself than at any time in the past week!

To her surprise and to her annoyance Dorothy discovered Tory moving feebly about the cabin room. She had piled fresh wood on the fire and hung up the kettle for the water to boil.

As a matter of fact, except that she also was thinner and paler, the expression of Tory Drew's face had altered less from their recent experience than Dorothy McClain's. Tory had been physically ill, but the burden had not been upon *her* shoulders. *She* had not been compelled to make difficult decisions, to

translate thought into swift action. *She* had not cared for and guarded another human being amid primitive conditions neither of them could have dreamed of ever being forced to meet.

"Tory Drew, you are out of bed when I told you to keep perfectly quiet until I returned! You are becoming so disobedient that I am sure you must be convalescent."

Dorothy was not by nature demonstrative. She had lived with a family of brothers who did not care for a display of affection; nevertheless, she stooped and kissed Tory, although they had been separated only a few hours.

The two girls had been friends since their first introduction to each other and were infinitely closer now. Tory was aware that Dorothy had saved her life, and to Dorothy in the past week Tory had been like an ill child.

"Don't leave me again this afternoon and I'll be perfectly obedient," Tory agreed. "You can't imagine how the moments drag by without you. Really I am much better and can no longer endure seeing you bear all the hardships. I shall never in this world be able to repay you. Good gracious, what on earth has that dog found and brought into the

cabin?" and Tory dropped into a chair, a little overcome by her recent exertions and startled by the size of the animal the dog proudly laid at her feet.

The afternoon passed swiftly with Dorothy and Tory. They had so much to think and talk of and Dorothy necessarily was busy every moment. She had heard the old Bible expression, "a hewer of wood and a drawer of water," and of late the meaning had become perfectly clear. Besides, she had to hunt and fish and to prepare all the food.

To-day she cleaned two quail for their dinner and made a small hoecake with water and salt and a cupful of the much prized corn meal.

Tory sat watching them bake in the hot ashes, while Dorothy gathered a bowl of wild blackberries from the bushes behind the cabin. The woods that were not a quarter of a mile away would soon be filled with ripe nuts, beach nuts, black walnuts, hickory nuts and a few chestnuts, but until frost they could not be used for food. Nevertheless, Dorothy realized with a thrill of gratitude that when the wild berries ceased to be eatable, nature would provide them with other supplies.

When darkness fell both girls went promptly

to bed. They had no light except the firelight; Dorothy was worn out from the day's effort and Tory glad enough to retire after her first freedom from complete invalidism.

Ordinarily Dorothy had come to dread the nights far more than the days. The sense of their remoteness and of her own responsibility was apt to overpower her when she first lay down. She had arranged herself a bed on the floor beside Tory with old bedclothes discovered stored away in the attic chamber upstairs. The two quilts and blanket had first been washed in the water of the creek and dried in the sun before she had made use of them.

To-night Dorothy found herself too tired to sleep immediately, not that she was depressed; Tory was now so much better that they had spent a really happy afternoon. The worst of the strain seemed to be past.

"Even presuming we *should* be compelled to remain here all winter in this cabin, I don't think we need perish, do you, Dorothy? What an experience! Would you really be so wretched? I shall now be able to help! Certainly both of us can manage when you have managed alone. Who dreamed when we joined the Girl Scouts we should have to

pass through this crucible? When we return to civilization I shall insist you have won the Golden Eaglet on half a dozen qualifications," Tory remarked, half wistful, half gay and altogether like herself at last, just before her eyes closed for the night.

Dorothy was recalling this speech as she lay listening to her companion's quiet breathing. To-night Tory's fever was gone entirely and her temperature normal for the first time in a week.

Finally she glanced at her wrist watch, discovering that after all it was not yet ten o'clock and there was no sense in being so impatient at her own sleeplessness.

Getting up, Dorothy wandered to the front door and opened it. As a matter of fact this had become her regular nightly custom. She never confessed to herself the reason why she gazed out into the night before finally surrendering herself to unconscious repose. The truth was that deep in her subconscious mind she was always hoping to see some one approaching to rescue them.

Of course there was no one. Who would be so foolish as to attempt to travel through this tangled wilderness at night? About her were only the night noises of the animals and

birds and the infinite quiverings of the leaves and grasses.

"In the morning I shall give up all thought of anyone coming to find us," she announced, speaking aloud, but gently so as not to disturb her companion. "Tory is right. If once we accept this situation we shall enjoy it. How many times I have talked of wishing to be a prisoner! Now my chance has arrived, I don't seem altogether to appreciate it!"

Dorothy McClain was a tall, fair girl with long braids of light hair, a high color and clear blue-gray eyes. To-night she had taken off her coat, but was still wearing her knickerbockers and blouse.

"If the worst comes to the worst and Tory and I find we cannot live here through the winter, before the snows come we must start down the mountain and accept whatever comes."

With this decision Dorothy closed and barred the door, the fastening was not very strong or secure; she had made it herself of a piece of wood that slipped through two loops. If there were any nails about the cabin they were safely concealed, for she had searched for them in vain.

Returning to bed, Dorothy went to sleep at

once and slept heavily. She left her rifle within a few feet so that she could reach out and grasp it upon first awakening. Neither Tory nor the dog that lay near her and close to the fire stirred. Sleep had overcome them earlier in the evening.

At the moment when Dorothy sprang to her feet she was scarcely conscious of what had aroused her. Then she heard a loud noise at the front door and realized that some one was opening it from the outside, hammering first with both fists and then by a thrust of the shoulder.

"Lie still, Tory," she commanded, and picking up her rifle moved forward and stood in a streak of light caused by an aperture in the roof. At this same instant the door burst open.

A man entered the cabin. The dog uttered a growl and sprang at him, the next instant he was licking the man's shoes and fawning upon him.

Dorothy felt rather than saw Tory sitting up. She had not stepped out on the floor. Her own hand she kept on the trigger of her rifle as she walked nearer the intruder.

The firelight was dim, but the moon had arisen and the door stood wide open so that

the silver gleam made a straight path inside the room, as Dorothy moved forward in it.

The newcomer stepped back.

"Diana, and in my own cabin and with my own hunting-dog!" he murmured. "Am I dreaming?"

The voice was a well-bred southern voice and the young man Dorothy beheld did not look like a wicked character.

"I am sorry. I fear I owe you an explanation for bursting in upon you like this. Truth to tell, how was I to know my own cabin was inhabited? I left here about ten days ago with no idea there were either wood-nymphs or earth-maidens within fifty miles. I am sure I am glad the cabin has been of service. And I am most grateful to you for looking after my 'beastie.' I would not have left the old fellow had I not expected to be back within two or three days. Perhaps you would rather have a light on the subject. You must have found it pretty dark unless you were provided with lamps and candles. I was forced to go down the mountain for supplies because pretty much everything had given out that a fellow requires even for this primitive existence."

In the meantime and as he talked the new-

comer had lighted a match. He now stuck a candle that he carried in his pocket on a corner of the mantel.

His eyes remained fastened upon Dorothy.

She put down her gun with a little shiver of distaste for it. She wished she might never touch a firearm again.

Her voice had a little catch in it, but was grave and sweet.

"My friend and I owe you the apology if this is your cabin. I believe wayfarers do not apologize for helping one another out. We were lost on this mountain and fate was good enough to direct us here a week ago. We have been here ever since."

Tory walked forward and slipped her arm through Dorothy's. The young man saw her, but did not direct his gaze or his conversation to her.

"Perhaps I ought to explain. My name is Tom Courtenay and I am not a native mountaineer. My home is near Lexington, Kentucky, and I am a student at the University of Virginia in the winter time. This summer I got so tired of dances and parties I sneaked off here to have a quiet month to myself."

Partly from sheer relief and partly from the oddness of their situation, Dorothy laughed.

"Well, I regret it, but you cannot enjoy your solitude for a few hours anyhow and perhaps for a longer time. I am Dorothy McClain and this is my friend, Victoria Drew. We owe you more explanation. We have been spending the summer in the Kentucky mountains in an old house overlooking Mystery Valley. Some time ago we decided to follow the trail over the mountains until we reached the Kentucky River and the open road. Tory and I managed to lose the others, and as she has been very ill there was nothing to do but remain here. In the morning we will leave if you will kindly show us the way. To-night if you don't mind we can scarcely manage to depart immediately."

The young man whistled.

"Well, not unless you depart over my dead body. Tell me, please, did you have food with you? How have you managed? I feel somehow as if I had been an amazingly poor host, and Kentuckians from the blue grass portion of the state pride themselves upon their hospitality."

"Oh, we have survived, but we did not have supplies with us! I am afraid you will find we have eaten everything you left behind."

"I didn't leave scarcely anything, but don't

trouble. I am having some food sent up the mountain to-morrow. We got half way up and when darkness fell my guide and mule declined to go farther. I must have had a premonition, I was so determined to reach my own cabin to-night, so I have been hiking through the woods in the moonlight."

The young man unstrapped a knapsack from his shoulder.

"I am not entirely unprovided for as it is. Aren't you both hungry? I am starving. Don't you think we might have a feast? I know it may seem a little informal, but then our meeting in this fashion isn't exactly formal, now is it?"

The two girls laughed.

"It is a brilliant idea!" Tory answered. "I have been ill and did not dream how hungry I really was until this instant."

Stooping, she recklessly flung half a basket of chips upon the smoldering fire.

Standing close beside each other she observed that the owner of the cabin who had introduced himself as Tom Courtenay was half a head taller than Dorothy and dark as she was fair. He had brilliant eyes with an irrepressible gleam of humor in them and strong white teeth.

CHAPTER IV

A SEPTEMBER DAY

"I REALLY do believe that this is the best possible plan under the circumstances, Dorothy."

Tory Drew spoke slowly and lazily and in a tone suggesting a pleasant physical content.

She and Dorothy McClain were seated upon a blanket spread out on the ground. The warm yellow early September sun was pouring down upon them. Behind them the cabin door and windows stood wide open, a breeze stirred overhead.

Dorothy did not appear so entirely serene and at ease.

"I suppose you and Mr. Courtenay know best, Tory," she laughed as if a little doubtful. "You were so sure that this was one of those occasions when one simply had to go ahead. Certainly you are improving. I never saw such a change in any one in a few days. Is it because you are enjoying other society rather than mine? Of course Mr. Courtenay is a nice fellow and he is doing everything in his

power to make this wilderness agreeable. You get on swimmingly together."

Tory's answering laughter rang out over the cleared spaces and attracted the attention of the solitary other figure in the landscape, who was on his way to the creek with a water bucket over one arm and his dog close at his heels.

He stopped, put down his bucket and gave a Scout signal.

Both girls waved in response and went on with their own conversation.

"You are too absurd, Dorothy McClain, and not a bit fair! Of course I am better. Aren't we both relieved from the uncertainty of not knowing whether we were to remain an hour or a day or the rest of our natural lives, long or short, upon this mountain top? If I did appear too ill to know what was happening, I was only now and then so completely unconscious that I failed to have a vague sense of our predicament. Can't you realize how deeply I was troubled seeing all you were forced to do and I unable to help? I am delighted that Tom Courtenay now insists on doing most of the strenuous things. He has had a difficult time persuading you to allow him, and in fact has not persuaded you, but

has gone ahead without your consent. Don't you think we might agree, Dorothy, to call one another by our first names? Mr. Courtenay suggested I propose the idea to you. He has been a good deal spoiled by girls and does not understand your manner toward him."

"My manner toward him!" Dorothy changed color. "What do you mean, Tory? I am sure I do not treat him any differently from other boys I have known! With six brothers and their friends I have had a good deal of experience. Don't I behave as though I appreciated his kindness? Really he has been most considerate in a difficult situation. Worse than if we had been left at his doorstep, don't you think, to discover two maidens actually inside one's house, leaving the doorstep to the owner of the cabin?"

Tory stretched out on the ground, crossing her arms under her head and gazing quizzically at her companion beneath her dark lashes.

"Dorothy dear, you are one of the most ingenuous persons in the world! Now please don't be angry, I don't know why it seems to annoy people to call them ingenuous. What amuses me is that you do treat Tom Courtenay exactly as you do other boys and he is puzzled and interested and a little annoyed. From

what he has told us don't you appreciate that he is a spoiled and only son and that his family has a lot of money? Yes, I know he has a small sister, but she is ever so much younger. Besides, Tom Courtenay is not a boy, he is seventeen and has had many more adventures than the other boys we have known. Otherwise he would not have known how to accept the present situation so gracefully. Let us not discuss him any more, since here he comes!"

Tory was mistaken. The young man went first to the cabin and returned with a tray bearing a jug and three tin cups.

"You did not know I was a magician, did you, and could produce lemonade in the Kentucky wilderness even as the Indian fakirs make lemon trees grow out of the dust before your wondering eyes? I am sorry the service is so poor. Next time I am at home I shall take lessons from George Washington Smith, our colored butler. He has lived with my parents longer than I have and is much more important to their comfort."

He flung himself down on the ground near the two girls.

"Oh, you need not apologize. Neither Tory nor I are accustomed to being waited upon to any great extent. Certainly I am

not! I am afraid you would be shocked if you could see the helter-skelter fashion in which we live at home. What do you think of a household where there are five boys and one man and an insignificant girl and only a single servant to look after us? She is not a servant exactly, but a friend and housekeeper," Dorothy McClain remarked. She spoke more abruptly than was usual with her. "Tory Drew, as you may have observed without my assistance, has led a different life. She is our Cosmopolitan Girl Scout and traveled over Europe with her father before she came to live in the small town of Westhaven, Connecticut. You disliked Westhaven at first, Tory, don't pretend otherwise! Some day you may have to allow my country doctor father to thank you for rescuing us, Mr. Courtenay, but I shan't ask you to come to Westhaven, you would be dreadfully bored by our New England village."

"Would I?" Tom Courtenay answered. "Do you know it never occurred to me, Miss McClain, to think that I like or dislike people according to the fashion in which they live? I had hoped you would ask me to your house some day, say when I was in New York City and could come to Westhaven for over night

and not be a nuisance for any length of time. I particularly would like to know your country doctor father. He seems to be the type of man I happen most to admire. Sorry you let me know you did not want me, because I might have appeared some day at your door without an invitation. What is that time-honored phrase, 'forewarned is forearmed'?"

Tom Courtenay's tone of voice and manner were courteous and half humorous, nevertheless, Dorothy found herself blushing furiously. She experienced an awkwardness and an embarrassment to which she was almost wholly unaccustomed. Strange the effect she and her new acquaintance had upon each other! Almost everything they said or did managed to develop a misunderstanding.

"You know I should be happy to have you come to see us at any time you like, if for no other reason than because Tory and I have occupied your house for ten days without the shadow of an invitation. I did not intend to suggest you were a snob. You are not a snob, whatever else you may be."

Dorothy's speech was apologetic and at the same time so militant that Tom Courtenay smiled and held out his hand.

"Do shake hands. I know you did not

intend what I made a pretense of believing. Perhaps I was trying to work myself up to the point of thinking so. And whatever I am or may be in the future, to quote your own words, I do want to play fair with you."

Tom Courtenay had the charm of manner that most girls yield to at once, there was something in it wholly flattering, as if for the time being he was thinking and caring for no one else.

His effect upon Dorothy McClain was not the accustomed one.

"Nonsense! Why should you want to play fair with me rather than with anyone else? Playing fair means being fair to everybody in the world alike or else it does not count for much. I do not think you a snob, but you are spoiled, and my family would bore you after a little even if you possess such good manners that you might be able to conceal the fact.

"Good gracious, Dorothy," Tory interrupted, "don't start another argument! Are we to call one another by our first names? I suppose three days is not a long acquaintance, but think of how much we have seen of each other. Why I have known people for months and spent not a third of the amount of time in their society."

Tom Courtenay shook his head.

"Miss Drew or Tory, whichever name I am to be permitted to use, don't *you* go back upon me. I'll take myself off at once to my house in the trees. I had not planned to disappear before nightfall, but if you are as bored with my society as your last remark indicates——"

Tory sighed and changed her position.

"Don't be tiresome, Tom, I decline to take your persiflage so seriously as Dorothy does. You can come to visit me at any time you wish in Westhaven. I am sure my aunt and uncle, Miss Victoria Fenton and Mr. Richard Fenton, will be most happy to welcome you. Then if Dorothy turns you down as completely as you seem to expect, you can always make love to my Aunt Victoria. 'Hey nonny, hoh nonny, tell me how my lady fares?' Isn't it time we went in and prepared lunch? I am hungry these last few days. Thank fortune and Tom Courtenay, Dorothy McClain, that we have something to eat besides what you had to find and prepare. Our families, Tom, must have received the telegrams yesterday telling them that we were safe on the tip of Firescald Mountain, don't you think? Let me see: Your man came up the mountain the

morning following your unceremonious arrival at your own cabin in the middle of the night. He must have required a part of a day and most of the night to return down the hill to the nearest town where there is a telegraph station. A few more hours and our telegrams reached home. I wish I felt as convinced that Miss Frean, our Scout Captain, the Girl Scouts and Dorothy's brother, Donald, have been able to learn of our whereabouts. I have a mental picture of them wandering hopelessly over this old mountain with no clue to point the way and little hope now of ever discovering their lost sheep."

"Yes, I appreciate that side of the situation," Tom Courtenay returned, serious now, with the mockery gone from his manner. "I considered that very point when we decided upon our scheme of action. I gave Jenkins instructions to get in touch with every village in the vicinity of Firescald Mountain and the Kentucky River. He was to advertise in the small town papers that the two Girl Scouts lost upon Firescald Mountain were safe. One of your party must have gone to the nearby mountain towns to ask for aid. I have an idea that they must have telegraphed to your people also after you had been lost

several days. They would ask if they heard from you, directly or indirectly, to get in touch with them. Of course I could have managed more quickly, I suppose, had I gone down the trail instead of Jenkins. Still, I could not reach the conclusion that he would make as good a chaperon as I have made. I was not going to leave you two girls alone and unprotected again in this mountain, not by a long shot! Yes, I realize, Miss McClain, that you managed perfectly well without me before my arrival and so could have managed a second time. I was selfishly remembering that *I* should have been anxious, as I know these hills better than you. You are not well enough, Tory, to make the trip down the mountain. You will be stronger, I hope, when old Jenkins returns with a pair of the mountain horses. Then you can ride part of the way. Time enough to say farewell to the little cabin on Firescald Mountain and our solitude not—'aux deux,' but to our solitude 'aux trois.' Hope my French is correct. After all the years I have studied I might know more! If you girls are hungry wait until I call you, I'll have lunch in a quarter of an hour."

Dorothy arose.

"No, you won't, Tom, or at least I insist upon helping. If you will undertake all the heavy work, Tory and I must do our share. Remember we have been trying to educate you into understanding the superior accomplishments of the Girl Scouts over other girls. So you intend to call me Miss McClain and Tory Drew, Tory? I call that *not* playing fair with a vengeance."

Dorothy lifted up her face toward the perfect summer sky with clouds like foaming white chariots riding across the blue horizon.

"Won't you take us for a walk this afternoon along one of the trails you have talked about? Tory ought to test her strength, don't you think, before we start down the mountain?" she asked.

Dorothy was now standing slim and straight as a boy with a fresh healthy color in her cheeks and all the weariness and gravity of a few days before vanished. Now that the anxiety and too strenuous labor had been lifted, she never had felt better.

Tory Drew gazed at her admiringly. Then her glance wandered to their other companion and she smiled. He was now standing beside Dorothy, and was several inches taller. No matter how rough the clothes he might

chance to be wearing Tom Courtenay could not avoid giving an impression of wealth and breeding. To-day he wore an old pair of riding trousers, a flannel shirt and golf stockings, yet no one could have doubted his distinguished ancestry.

He liked Dorothy McClain more than either of them appreciated. She annoyed and surprised him by treating him as she would any one of her brothers' friends who had chanced to do her a kindness. At the same time her straightforwardness interested and piqued him. Already he was determined that some day they should be better friends.

Tory was left to loaf and enjoy the September sunshine until she was summoned. After her companions' departure she half closed her eyes.

"Tom Courtenay has never known a girl before in his life who takes boys in the matter-of-fact fashion that Dorothy does. He will either like or dislike her very much. Funny old Dorothy, she is so absurd in thinking that he prefers me!"

Tory closed her eyes altogether, loving the warmth of the September sunshine that stirred her with vague ambitions and dreams.

CHAPTER V

POINTS OF CONTACT

"I AM off for the day to give you a rest from my society. If I do not turn up by supper time don't wait for me. You see, I am taking my day's rations."

After breakfast on the following morning Tom Courtenay was engaged in packing a small knapsack that he carried strapped over his shoulders during his mountain tramps.

The odors of the room were a combination of freshly fried bacon, coffee and toast and the cleaner fragrances of the mountain air, sweeping through the open doors and windows and stirring the dying embers of the fire.

Dorothy McClain was clearing the table and Tory setting things to order in the big, simple room. There was no furniture save the cot and pine table and several chairs and a small mirror hung above a low shelf. The series of shelves were most important, since they held the few pieces of crockery and tinware necessary to a prolonged woodland existence.

"Oh, you need not depart upon your hike on our account," Tory returned teasingly. "We shall miss your helpful presence. I know you have carried all the water necessary for the day and cut and brought in all the wood the cabin can conveniently contain, still there are other ways in which you might be useful in the course of the day. So please state plainly, even brutally, that you have stood about all you can endure of the presence of the two Girl Scouts who have taken possession of your house and home. Since either they or you must go, you prefer to strike out into the wilderness. You came to this cabin because, according to your own statement, you had wearied of too much feminine companionship. And lo! look what fate has done to you! 'Out of the frying pan into the fire' is a statement of the situation, if not a polite one."

Tom Courtenay laughed, but was not in the least embarrassed.

"Right you are, Tory! I never have seen so much of any two other girls in so brief an acquaintance in my life. I scarcely am in the habit of eating breakfast, lunch and dinner with them as soon as introductions are over. By the way, were we introduced? I remember

some vague exchange of titles when Dorothy was trying to make up her mind whether to destroy me with my own rifle."

Dorothy flushed.

"Nonsense, I did not intend to shoot you. I was merely trying to guard Tory. But do hurry and be off. I know you want a day to yourself in the hills, and although Tory may protest at being left with no one except me, really we have a great deal to do and can manage much better if you are out of the way. Come back in time for supper, we shall look for you. You have eight hours before you and can surely return by six o'clock."

Tom Courtenay struck a tragic attitude.

"No, I shall not return by six. In all probability I shall behave like Rip Van Winkle. Fact is, don't wait up for me. If I am late I shall go directly to bed in my house in the trees. See you first thing in the morning!"

Fifteen minutes after, when Tom Courtenay had moved off along the mountain trail, both girls stood at the cabin door watching him until he disappeared.

"Tom Courtenay is really an extremely nice fellow," Dorothy remarked judicially. "Of course he has traits of character I do not

admire. He has a habit of flattering people and expects them to enjoy it and like him all the better. And he does not really mean what he says. I confess flattery annoys me, you seem not to mind, Tory."

"Don't I?" Tory laughed. "No, I suppose not. Truth is, Dorothy McClain, you are the exception, I am not. Most people like to be flattered. You will like it yourself some day, when it is skillfully administered. You are so sincere yourself that you naturally detest what seems to you to be insincerity. But I don't think Tom Courtenay has been insincere with us. He has been a perfect trump! He has simply been used to fashionable society and is older and has more charming manners than the boys we are accustomed to know. He is joking a great part of the time and I like to repay him in his own coin."

Dorothy turned back into the room.

"Yes, Tory, I envy you the ability. What I really started out to say was this: Tom Courtenay realized that there must be things we have to attend to and that we could manage better if he were not near. So without even the slightest suggestion of his real reason, he has gone away and given us a free day. I really hope he will be back by night.

I suppose I am nervous about these mountain trails after our sad experience. Are you, Tory?"

The other girl shook her head.

"I don't know. What I do know is that I never wish to see another laurel leaf or flower to the longest day I live. What is the task we have specially on hand that you and Tom Courtenay are so mysterious over? I should like to have gone on the all-day hike myself, only I was not invited. These September days are so glorious. Was I really ill a few days ago? I can't believe it."

"Well, Tory, I am glad you have so much energy. I hope Tom Courtenay did not guess what I have in mind. Has it occurred to you that, if we are to go down the hill in the next day or so and be reunited with the other girls and our Scout Captain, we should try and wash our clothes? Sorry to be so practical! I have of course washed a few pieces while you were ill, but now we must manufacture costumes and go down to the creek for a hard morning's work."

At the sight of Tory's face, Dorothy laughed gaily.

"You are horrified, Tory Drew. You have never dreamed of this particular occupation

under pioneer conditions. Never mind, my dear, you are still a halfway invalid, so you may sit on the bank and offer advice. I don't mind, really; it was rather fun the other day, only one is in danger of tumbling into the creek along with one's laundry."

Tory wore her most reproachful air.

"It is not kind of you, Dorothy, even to suggest that I would allow you to do my share of the work when I am perfectly well able to do it for myself. What do you suppose Memory Frean or my beloved Kara in far-off Europe would think if they knew the character you believe me to possess?"

Tory followed the other girl and put an arm about her shoulders, attempting to give her a slight shake. She was not especially successful, as Dorothy was far stronger and taller nor had she recovered so fully as she believed.

"I have a picture I want to show you some day, Dorothy. I painted it when I was a small girl. My father and I were in beautiful France, in Brittany, I think. One day we had been out together for hours, father sketching along the river bank. I remember I became tired playing and picked up some crayons and began sketching. I made a

picture of half a dozen of the Breton peasant women washing their clothes in the river. Father was very proud of it and said it was the best thing I had ever done. I was only eight years old at the time. I trust I have improved as an artist since although I am by no means sure. Still, from that day to this it has been my secret ambition to wash my own clothes out of doors and in running water. Now you would try to remove the long-sought opportunity from me!"

The two girls spent a happy, amusing morning. In the afternoon they loafed and talked indoors while their clothes dried in the September sun.

True, their Girl Scout uniforms were somewhat worn and faded. "But they are fresher and certainly a good deal more respectable after our washing," Tory announced when at five o'clock they dressed and sat waiting for Tom Courtenay's return.

He had announced that in all probability he would not return, nevertheless the girls both expected him.

After preparing supper of bread and cheese and jam and tea they continued to wait. The days were becoming noticeably shorter and darkness soon closed in. Another half hour

and still no human figure appeared within their range of vision.

"Do you know, Tory," Dorothy began unexpectedly, letting her gaze shift from the outdoors to look more closely at her companion, "I shall never forget this past ten days. There have been difficult hours and yet I have the feeling I shall wish to return here some day, I cannot say when or why exactly. I feel more at home in this little cabin than I did during the summer in the great 'House by the Granite Ledge' that overlooked Mystery Valley."

Tory's white, eager face with its pointed chin and aureole of red-gold hair showed a wistful elf-like quality in the gathering darkness.

"I am not so surprised, Dorothy. You have always loved the outdoors and have been more successful at all outdoor sports than the other Girl Scouts. Of late while I was ill you played another outdoor game, this time you faced reality. And you won your game against more difficult odds than most Girl Scouts ever know. Some of them may be even a little envious when they learn of our experience. Come, let us go in to supper. Our knight is true to his word and will not be seen again to-night."

When supper was over Tory confessed fatigue and curled up on her couch.

Fearing she might be cold, Dorothy placed a log on the fire. The evenings were cold in spite of the midday warmth, and the fire in the cabin was never allowed to die out altogether.

Restless, Dorothy wandered to the still open front door. She turned to discover whether Tory had observed her, but found Tory was already asleep.

A few moments Dorothy lingered. How familiar the landscape beyond the cabin door had become to her in this past ten days! In after years she would be more apt to recall the scene at night than during any hour of the day. During Tory's illness and her own loneliness she made this pilgrimage nightly to gaze at the sky and at the black and mysterious circle of the outlying hills. How beautiful the scene had been each night when the stars or moon shone down through the blanket of the dark!

Dorothy walked a few feet away from the cabin.

To-night was more exquisite than any other.

"Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold," she quoted

aloud, remembering the Scout Captain's effort to teach her troop of Girl Scouts their early lessons in astronomy.

Of late Dorothy had oftentimes regretted that she had not been a more devoted student. She now recognized the Pole Star above the Great Dipper and showing paler than the others.

Dorothy wandered on. There was no intention in her movements that she had so far confessed to herself, yet she was really anxious to find out that Tom Courtenay had returned and would sleep near them in his house in the tree.

CHAPTER VI

FEAR AND RELIEF

"TOM COURTENAY! Tom Courtenay!" Dorothy called softly.

She was standing under an immense oak tree looking up at what Tom Courtenay was pleased to call his house in the tree. In reality the house consisted of a platform of about eight feet in length and five in width firmly fastened to the tree's lower boughs and with a canvas cover stretched above.

To-night one could see under the starlight that the platform was empty save for an army blanket tightly rolled and piled in one corner.

Dorothy lingered. She was torn between her desire to be assured that Tom Courtenay was safe and her fear that Tory be not left alone in the cabin with the door unbarred even for a few moments.

The night was singularly clear. The branches of the oak showed black between the shimmering silver of the leaves.

Placing her fingers to her lips, Dorothy

halloed again. She was almost as concerned as if her new acquaintance had been one of her twin brothers, Lance or Donald. She wished to know him safe in bed for the night before she could follow his example.

A second time she received no answer, then slowly Dorothy turned to leave. Tory was not undressed and had not been sound asleep. If she awakened suddenly and found herself alone she would be frightened. But having gone only half a dozen yards, a familiar voice at some distance off broke into the Girl Scout hunting song.

"Now the Four-way lodge is opened:
Now the hunting winds are loose,
Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain;
Now the young men's hearts are troubled
For the whisper of the trues,
Now the Red Gods make their medicine again."

Tom Courtenay was returning. His voice had sounded close, although so far neither one could see the other.

Dorothy stood waiting. Immediately before her was a square of light. Close to the path that led from the cabin to the house in the tree, low shrubbery formed a deep black border on either side, to which the stars tonight added a faint topmost layer of light.

At the moment Dorothy was not looking upward or downward but off in the direction from which the voice had sounded.

A figure was breasting the hill. She could now see the outline of Tom Courtenay's form, with his gun and day's capture.

"Tom," she called, "it is I, Dorothy McClain, here waiting for you. What a wanderer to have stayed away so long! I am glad you are back at last. Well, good-night."

"Dorothy, wait please, I want to join you and walk to the cabin."

She remained still. The night was gentle and serene, the hill-top free from the night terrors that she had felt occasionally in the past. An hour after their surprising meeting Tom Courtenay's presence had brought a comfortable sense of safety.

Dorothy felt calm and quiet, nothing was farther from her thought or imagination at present than any possibility of approaching danger. Nevertheless, suddenly she felt herself become curiously and unexpectedly cold. Her entire body stiffened, her breath came in short, painful gasps. She was not aware of any reason for this, yet irresistibly her eyes were drawn to the ground.

Within a few inches of her feet and lying across the small stretch of light was what appeared at the first glance to be the shorn limb of a tree. Then unmistakably the black length moved and slowly uncoiled.

Dorothy remained transfixed. She may have cried out her fear, but was not conscious of the fact. Most of us, brave or cowardly, have certain hidden nervous terrors. Dorothy McClain had met all the demands of the past ten days, physical and spiritual, with fine, tempered bravery and good judgment. Now she was a stricken child.

In the southwestern mountain ranges she knew there were certain varieties of poisonous snakes. Was it possible that to-night she could see the coral flecks in the stretched black skin of the reptile about to strike?

Dorothy fell backward into the low shrubbery, Tom Courtenay had shoved her aside with such compelling force. And she lay still with closed eyes, glad not to see, only to hear what was taking place. The butt of Tom Courtenay's gun struck not once but half a dozen times. She had witnessed the first skillful blow even before he attempted to thrust her out of danger.

A moment later Dorothy arose. She was

feeling a little stiff from her fall and ashamed of her cowardice. Ordinarily her training as a Girl Scout served her in emergencies. Moreover, a girl with six brothers was supposed to be able to rise above the nervous timidities of other girls.

"I am sorry I was such a nuisance. I might have thought of something to do to save myself instead of being so utterly stupid and paralyzed. Suppose we go on to the cabin. I think it has been a quarter of an hour since I left Tory alone and she may be alarmed. I am afraid my wish to know you were safe for the night led you into danger."

Dorothy tried to make her voice calm and cool as usual, but there was a slight nervous trembling she could not wholly conceal.

Tom Courtenay slipped his arm through hers, and Dorothy had the same sense of reassurance that Don's strength now and then afforded her.

"I hope you will come to Westhaven some day. I think you misunderstood me the other morning, but if we don't ever see each other again, please don't think I'll forget the little cabin and your kindness," Dorothy murmured, embarrassed by her effort to say the conventionally correct thing under the circumstances.

Her mother had been dead a number of years, Dorothy had lived in a matter-of-fact and abrupt family of men. Her friends among the Girl Scouts had admired her straightforward directness. Not until her meeting with Tom Courtenay had she been ashamed of her lack of certain social graces.

In the darkness Tom Courtenay smiled, appreciating her point of view.

"Are you under the impression that when you and Tory leave the cabin I shall stay on here alone and not know until some weeks or months later whether you are safe and with your friends? Try and be prepared for the worst, Dorothy! Whoever appears to act as your escort down the trail will be accompanied by me. This may be more surprising, as soon as I meet your Scout Captain, Miss Frean, it is my firm determination to make her like me as much as possible and as soon as possible."

Glad of the fact that her companion did not discuss her terror of a few moments before, Dorothy interrupted:

"I am sure you need not be troubled. Miss Frean is sure to like you immediately. Most people do, don't they?"

"A compliment from Dorothy McClain any

fellow might be proud to receive, I don't believe she ever flatters to attain her own end," Tom Courtenay was thinking as he answered: "Well, I hope in this case you are a prophet, Dorothy, but you don't yet know why I wish to woo and win your Scout Captain. You and Tory must agree to help me. Remember, you told me that your Patrol of Girl Scouts with your Captain and your brother Donald had started out from Mystery Valley intending to travel along the Kentucky River and then into the blue-grass country?"

Dorothy laughed.

"I certainly do remember. We expected to be only a few days in the mountains. In fact, our slogan was, 'Oh, for the lure of the open road.' Tory and I have upset things dreadfully. I have often wondered in this past ten days if the others have gone on with our original plan. I presume they have been waiting at one of the little towns at the foot of the mountain for news of one kind or another. Of course, I realize neither Miss Frean nor my brother Donald, will give up the search until we are discovered, dead or alive, as the advertisements for the lost read. What is it you need Tory and me to help you

bring to pass? We should be grateful for a chance. At present all the gratitude is on our side."

"It is? Oh, well, I am not so sure! At present I will let you think so if this will influence you. I have told you my home was near Lexington and in the very heart of the blue-grass country. I want you and Tory and Miss Frean and your brother and friends to make us a visit before you leave the state. Don't refuse and say there are too many of you and that you do not know my mother and father. I can answer any objection. Our house is very large; I don't remember how many bedrooms it contains. As for not knowing my father and mother, you can make their acquaintance in a very few moments. There is only one other member of the family, my small sister Patricia, known as Pat, not only because the name is easier to say, but because it better fits the 'enfant terrible.' As soon as we reach civilization I intend to telegraph mother the entire story of my discovery of two babes, not in the woods, but in my own cabin, and all that followed. Mother will write your Scout Captain at once."

Dorothy shook her head.

"You talk like a prince in a fairy story, Tom

Courtenay. Of course we must never consider making you a visit. But one thing you can count upon, Tory and I long to meet your family and see your home. Tory has traveled a great deal. A thousand-acre farm in the blue-grass region of Kentucky may not seem extraordinary to her, but it will be an earthly fairyland to me. I told you I never had been outside of the small town of Westhaven, except for a few trips to New York City, until this summer in Kentucky. You know, we are intending to pass through Lexington if our journey along the open road has not been abandoned. So, Tom, we can manage to see you in Lexington for an hour or so without again taking possession of another of your homes. By the way, how did you chance to own this small cabin in the heart of nowhere?"

They were walking slowly and talking with such interest that they had not looked toward the cabin, now only a few yards away.

"Oh, if you are coming to Lexington I shall not trouble over the future. Mother will arrange matters, she generally accomplishes what she wants to accomplish."

"You mean what her son wants," Dorothy returned. "I wonder if his desires are always so prodigal—ten unknown visitors at one fell

swoop!" The intonation of her voice changed. "Do I sound as if I were teasing? I am envying you. My mother has been dead a good many years. Look! What has happened? The cabin is blazing with lights. And don't you hear voices? What has—what can have occurred to Tory!"

Before Tom Courtenay could reply Dorothy had escaped and was running toward the open cabin door.

She was startled but not frightened. Almost at once she had recognized the voices and guessed.

For her own pleasure and satisfaction she remained an instant gazing into the cabin without announcing her presence.

With reckless extravagance Tory Drew had lighted every candle the cabin contained. In spite of the warmth of the night she had piled the fire with fresh logs. Tory herself, as if she were a little girl, was seated in her Scout Captain's lap, her arms about her neck.

Standing beside them Dorothy saw her own brother, Donald, and Ann Craig, the young girl who had lately joined their Troop of Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing.

The sight of her brother proved too much for Dorothy's restraint. An instant after she

was in his arms and weeping upon his shoulder.

"Cheero, Dorothy, who ever heard of your behaving like this? I don't think I have seen you cry since you were a tiny shaver. And things are all O. K. now. Miss Frean and I have found you and Tory says you have been a brick, a whole wagon load of bricks in fact. Besides, to a fellow who has slept out of doors every night since you and Tory gave us the shake it appears that you have been living in comfort." Donald's voice was slightly husky notwithstanding his determined effort toward cheerfulness.

"Have you been much frightened about us, Memory Frean?" Tory inquired. "Did you believe you would ever, ever find us?"

The Scout Captain did not reply at once, then she answered gravely:

"Yes, Tory, I did think we would find you. Donald and Ann Craig and I, perhaps for different reasons, never lost our faith. There were hours when we were discouraged and pretty miserable. Goodness knows how many weary miles we have tramped and how many people we have engaged to help us! Ann always insisted that you could keep alive for weeks out of doors at this time of the year.

As Donald says, however, we never expected to find you living in such state. Where is Mr. Courtenay? The man he sent down the mountain with the news of you came directly to the little town where the Girl Scouts were waiting. Donald and Ann and I were on the mountain, but they found us in a few hours."

Dorothy released herself from her brother's clasp. Donald and Miss Frean both showed the effect of the strain of the past ten days even more than she and Tory. Ann Craig was strong and radiant as ever, miles and miles of mountain climbing were what she required for her health and happiness.

"Tom Courtenay was with me only a moment ago. I am afraid I ran away and left him when I saw the lights in the cabin. He has been as nice as possible and Tory and I know we have bored him. He told us he came up on the mountain to escape girls."

Dorothy returned to the door and looked out. Tom Courtenay had vanished.

CHAPTER VII

THE KENTUCKY RIVER

THE small flat-bottom river steamboat moved slowly with the stream.

The entire upper deck was almost wholly given over to a group of young girls in Scout uniforms, to an older woman who obviously was their Scout Captain and to two young men who were their companions.

It was a lazy Indian summer day with a blue haze over the crests of the Cumberland Mountains. The hills no longer were so high and rugged; now along the gentler slopes of land, corn and tobacco fields warned of approaching changes in the landscape. The river itself was narrow and deep.

One of the young girls stood apart from the others and leaning over the railing was wistfully regarding the passing scenery. The girl was Ann Craig from Mystery Valley, the latest member of the troop of "Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing."

Early in the summer a Patrol of Girl Scouts with their leader from the little town of

Westhaven, Connecticut, decided to spend their holiday in a little known neighborhood of the Kentucky Mountains.*

Ann had come up from the valley to the "House by the Granite Ledge" with the hope that she might make new friends and learn more of the outside world. At this instant and with her twofold wish accomplished, she was returning home with her Girl Scout Patrol, she felt an intense longing to slip away and hide once more among her hills.

Her homesickness, however, became less keen as she listened to the conversation now taking place among her new friends and fellow travelers.

"I do not believe you had such an uncomfortable time waiting for Dorothy and me to be returned to you like articles from the 'lost and found' department, as we imagined," Tory Drew announced. At the same time she slipped her hand inside her Scout Captain's with a gesture of affection.

Margaret Hale, one of the other Girl Scouts, shook her head reproachfully.

"Tory Drew, you jest upon most subjects! You must not make a speech like your last one even in fun. Because you and Dorothy

* See "Girl Scouts in Mystery Valley."

discovered us living in one of the old-time watering places in the mountains is no reason to believe we were not uneasy about you every hour from the moment you disappeared. As a matter of fact, every one of us searched for you day and night for the first forty-eight hours. Afterwards Miss Frean declared that we should all end in being lost. She insisted that we must remain in one place until you were found or until we had given up hope, did you not, Miss Frean? We were fortunate to find a country hotel at the end of a mountain trail. There we stayed while Miss Frean, Donald McClain and Ann Craig, with a dozen guides, scoured the mountain. Never in my life have I spent ten days of such length and dreariness! Never will I forget our first sight of you when you appeared out of the wilderness! Most of us had been up since dawn watching and waiting. We knew you had been discovered in a hut on Firescald Mountain, but had no way of guessing how long it would take Miss Frean, Donald, Ann Craig and the guides to reach you. Remember, we were under the impression that you and Dorothy would be near starvation in spite of the berries and wild game in the hills."

Tory leaned forward.

Her Scout hat was lying in her lap and the wind from the river blew her hair in a bright aureole about her white, eager face.

"Sorry, Margaret, I *was* joking. Dorothy and I realized, even when things were at the worst with us, that we were probably less unhappy than the rest of you. After Tom Courtenay arrived to take possession of his cabin and we turned him out, I used to think we were like Adam with two Eves."

The group about her laughed and Tory flushed slightly as the Scout Captain shook her head.

"Oh, Tory, we were not unhappy all of the time," Teresa Peterson murmured. "I honestly tried to be, but now and then when there were country dances and we were invited I forgot all about you and Dorothy. Still, the dances were a little disappointing. I hope we will be invited to a few parties when we arrive in Lexington. Do you think we will, Mr. Courtenay?"

Teresa Peterson was sitting in a low chair near the young man to whom she had spoken. Unlike the other girls in her Scout Patrol, she was not a general favorite among them. Nevertheless, no one could deny her excep-

tional prettiness; her hair soft and dusky, curling in little tendrils about her low forehead, her eyes like velvet and her cheeks warmly colored. Her mother was an Italian and Teresa was less interested in the outdoor world than her companions. She was frank in the expression of her tastes and had not enjoyed the past summer in the mountains. Beauty and warmth and ease and agreeable and friendly people who did not ask too much of one represented her ideal.

At this moment Dorothy McClain, who was as unlike Teresa as one girl could possibly be unlike another, frowned and laughed.

"You are always more truthful than you are polite, my dear. How is anyone to know what friends we may make in our Girl Scout journey along the 'Open Road'?"

She glanced down where the small waves were lapping against the sides of the boat.

"'The Open Road!' So far we have ascended and descended narrow mountain trails and are continuing our travels on a Kentucky River steamboat. One plans and fate disarranges. Tory and I feel responsible for having delayed the expedition so long, but surely we shall reach the open road in a few days and carry out our original plan!"

Joan Peters covered her lips with a slender brown hand to conceal a comfortable yawn.

"Now that we are no longer worried over you and Tory, Dorothy, I confess I do not object to this few days of river travel. In fact, I am enjoying immensely these quiet, restful hours of loafing and conversation. And I never beheld more picturesque, beautiful scenery! We shall not soon forget these past weeks. After all, we had a strenuous summer in our house overlooking Mystery Valley. I for one am glad of the break before we start out on foot along the broad highway to see what one is told the Kentuckians call 'God's country'."

Fifteen years old, Joan Peters appeared older. She had light brown hair, eyes of almost the same shade and a fair, pale skin. Her features were regular and ordinarily she was reserved, even cold in her manner. The warmth of the September day, the gold and bronze and crimson in the Indian summer landscape were affording her a gentle, happy languor such as she seldom experienced.

The girl beside her continued as if she were finishing Joan's speech.

"I love the nights we spend in the little Kentucky towns along our way! Even now

I can hear the darkies singing the old river songs in the late twilights when our boat lands. My ambition is different from Teresa's; I want to be allowed to see one of the dances given by the colored people. I wonder if they dance as we do or if they dance the old Southern dances or those that go back to their African days. I am so interested in folk dancing and one sees so little that is original in this country. Why should we not have our own folk dances like other countries?"

Smaller than her present Girl Scout companions, Evan Phillips' figure revealed unusual strength and grace. She had been studying dancing since she was five or six years old. Her mother was a teacher of dancing and Evan hoped one day to become a professional dancer. She had short light hair and eyes of a beautiful transparent blue. The lower part of her face was surprising, square with a strong mouth and chin.

Louise Miller had not been listening to the little speeches flying above her head as lightly as the clouds moved overhead in the serene blue of the sky.

In the Patrol of Girl Scouts who were members of the Eagle's Wing Troop, Louise was less handsome, less vivacious than the others.

Her manner was slow and sometimes awkward and self-conscious. Only to the friends who knew her intimately was she able to reveal her real nature. She and Dorothy McClain had been devoted to each other since childhood. Her own family were not sympathetic with her moods or interests and Louise had found special solace among the Girl Scouts. Her only outward claims to beauty lay in the splendid mass of her copper colored hair with its red and brown shades and in her queer light gray eyes with the thick, short, dark lashes. She held an open book in her lap.

"When we reach the 'Open Road' will our walking tour lead us over any of the old trails of the famous Wilderness Road? I have been reading that in 1775 Daniel Boone with thirty axmen cut a trail known as 'Boone's Path.' It was afterwards called the 'Wilderness Road' and reached from Salisbury, N. C., to Boonesborough, Ky. It would be interesting to travel the old highways."

Edith Linder shook her head.

"Don't be so learned, Louise. I never heard of the 'Wilderness Road.' And Daniel Boone has seemed about as real to me as the pictures of the woodmen in my story of 'Little Red Riding Hood.' Until we arrived in

Kentucky this summer, Daniel Boone was a mythical figure in a coonskin cap, carrying a gun. One of my brothers owned an old school book with Daniel Boone's picture and the life of the great pioneer. To my shame I never read the story. This was before I became a member of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing troop."

The girl spoke jestingly; nevertheless, most of her companions realized the truth in her jesting. Edith Linder was less well educated than her group of friends. Her father had been a small farmer, who having failed as a farmer was now working in a factory in the conservative little town of Westhaven, Conn. Edith had not joined her present Patrol of Girl Scouts without opposition. Yet to-day she wore the badge of the Golden Eaglet, the highest symbol awarded to a Girl Scout.

The Scout Captain, Memory Frean, had not spoken during the past ten minutes. She turned to the girl who had last addressed a question to her.

"No, I do not believe we shall touch the old 'Wilderness Road.' Tom Courtenay will know. We travel by boat until we reach High Bridge. From there we go on foot or by wagon to Frankfort and Lexington. I doubt

if Tory and Dorothy can be trusted to walk any great part of the way. They may lose themselves in the blue-grass as successfully as they did in the mountains."

Until this instant no masculine voice had entered the running fire of conversation.

Tom Courtenay had been listening and awaiting an opportunity to speak.

He turned now to Teresa Peterson.

"Did you not ask me some time ago if I thought you would meet other Girl Scouts in the blue-grass and be invited to their parties? I am under the impression that Dorothy McClain interrupted and gave me no chance to answer. Do you dream for a moment I have given up my hope of having you for a visit? My mother's gifts of persuasion are greater than mine. We shall give as many dances as you like, one each night if you wish."

He looked toward Miss Frean, who was still sitting with her hand in Tory Drew's and her eyes on the opposite shore.

"You won't be obdurate forever, Miss Frean? Surely you and your Patrol of Girl Scouts will permit us to show you what Kentucky hospitality *can* mean. I have already written my mother."

Rising, Tom Courtenay walked over and stood above the woman and girl.

Tory laughed up at him, her eyes darkening and her cheeks flushing.

"You have shown us the hospitality of the hills in your cabin. I do not mean to pretend I do not wish to taste the hospitality of the blue-grass."

At this instant the movement of the steamboat grew noticeably slower.

On the west side of the river was a small cluster of houses and a steamboat landing.

A group of negroes and white men stood waiting.

Tory Drew, Dorothy McClain and Tom Courtenay crossed over to the ship's railing.

Donald McClain joined Ann Craig.

"Still dreaming of your beloved hills, Ann? What in the world is happening? See, over there, I mean."

Donald pointed toward the shore.

CHAPTER VIII

A STRANGE SPECTACLE

THE steamboat tied up at the landing. An hour or more would elapse before in leisurely fashion it moved on again. No one troubled concerning the length of time the boat waited; in fact, time appeared the least important consideration in Kentucky River travel.

"Suppose we go ashore, Ann, and see what is going on?" Donald McClain suggested. "The crowd of loafers does not seem to be at the river's edge to-day. See, they are up at the top of the hill in a cleared space and standing in a circle! Wonder if there is a one-horse circus in town?"

When Ann and Donald received permission to go ashore they discovered the entire party intended following their example.

It was more interesting and restful ashore. After several hours the small boat seemed cramped, and the towns themselves as well as their inhabitants were unique.

Twin Mules was the extraordinary title of the present village.

For a few moments the Girl Scouts, their Captain and the two boys lingered near the water.

The negroes were loading the boat with freight.

It was just before noon and the hottest hour of the day.

The heat and the odors of over-ripe vegetation, the perspiring bodies of the shoremen finally drew them away.

Walking up the slanting bank of sand and cobblestones, they reached a wooden sidewalk. This street seemed to be the main one in the town of "Twin Mules." It continued to meander up a slight incline.

The lower portion near the water was what is known in the south as "Shantytown." Here the colored people lived. Their houses were small, of two and three room cabins with broken places in the roofs and walls. In the windows were many splintered glass panes and in almost every house the front door stood wide open. The little colored pickaninnies were basking in the sunshine. An occasional chicken flew over them and entered a cabin, only to stroll calmly out again. A lean,

suspicious dog prowled about in nearly every yard. In tin cans standing in windows, doorways and yards red geraniums were blooming profusely. Morning-glory vines and gourd vines intertwined over the fronts of the houses and small porches. Now and then a Virginia creeper gorgeous in flame-colored blossoms of a second blooming covered an old tree stump or a wooden lattice.

The New England Girl Scouts were fascinated. The environment and the atmosphere of the tiny river town were unlike anything they had seen.

Tory Drew, the artist among them, felt her pulses throbbing with delight.

"Do you know, Tom Courtenay, I traveled with my father in Spain and in southern France when I was a little girl, yet I never saw a town more full of color and warmth than this one. I wish I had time to do some sketching."

Tom Courtenay smiled indulgently.

"I am afraid I am not so impressed, I am too accustomed to the small towns in Kentucky. I have never been to Europe. What interests me is the crowd on that vacant lot. Donald and Ann Craig seem determined to investigate, suppose you and Dorothy and I follow. Perhaps there is an outdoor camp meeting."

Tom Courtenay turned to Miss Frean.

"Won't you come with us? There is plenty of time, as we need not go back on the boat until she blows off steam. If you are seeking local color in Twin Mules we shall find it over there. Looks like either a circus or an outdoor meeting of some kind."

The scene certainly was not a camp meeting. As the little crowd of travelers drew nearer they could hear the twanging of a banjo and the laughing and clapping of hands.

The crowd parted politely to allow the newcomers place inside the circle. Beyond the crowd stood a large canvas-covered wagon. The canvas was not white or dust colored but of a bright gold and upon it painted in large letters that could be read a dozen yards away, "The World's Famous One Ring Circus. The Dollivers."

There was no circus tent, but a rope about an enclosure kept the spectators away from the performers.

At this instant a figure was circling about the ring on a broad bare-back horse. She looked like a girl of about fourteen. A tall thin man in a top hat mounted on a soap box held forth a paper hoop, which the rider leaped through. The crowd cheered.

A few moments later the tall man led the horse away.

The young girl did not leave the circle. A few moments after she was joined by a boy who must have been a year or more older. The banjo player twanged louder than before. The boy was dressed as a clown.

The two young people began to dance.

"That girl looks tired to death, I am sorry for her. What a life to have to entertain a crowd like this!" Dorothy McClain murmured.

Tory pressed forward with Evan Phillips close beside her. The dancing was remarkable. It was not easily described, as sometimes the steps and movements were the modern jazz and then they became slow and stately.

The sun shone hotter and the dust thickened.

The Scout Captain became uncomfortable. She never before had beheld such a strange spectacle, the mixed crown of colored people and country people and townspeople, the almost tropical heat of the September day, the delicate girl and sturdy boy dancing so furiously, almost frantically to keep the crowd amused. If only she were able to rescue the

girl from her present mode of life! In the past two years through her interest and work among the Girl Scouts in Westhaven, Memory Frean had grown to have a peculiar feeling for young girls. She had remained unmarried and for this reason felt the impulse to mother many girls.

She joined Tory and Evan Phillips, wondering if anyone else noticed what she observed. The girl who was dancing was no longer keeping time, her feet dragged, she was swaying uncertainly. The boy who was her companion was beginning to be alarmed, and his own pace grew slower. Through his white mask he also appeared nervous and uncertain.

The crowd was growing sympathetic and troubled. They were kindly people. Evidently it was some one's duty to stop the dancing, but who would shoulder the responsibility?

With this intention the Scout Captain moved up closer to the rope with the two Girl Scouts beside her in their Scout uniforms, Tory Drew and Evan Phillips. It became unnecessary, however, for her to speak. The girl in the ring was swaying more unevenly and suddenly tumbled in a small crumpled heap on the ground, her arms flung above her head, her face upturned to the noonday sun.

Immediately, and without a suggestion from their Leader, the small Patrol of Girl Scouts, who had been only idle spectators the moment before, assumed command.

Tory Drew and Evan and the Scout Captain slipped under the ropes.

The boy was seated on the ground with his dancing partner's head in his lap. The tears were streaking the white flour that covered his face.

"Don't be frightened, she will be all right in a few moments. It is the heat and the dust and the fatigue," Tory murmured. "Is she your sister?"

The boy nodded.

Miss Frean and Evan Phillips were administering First Aid. Evan was pouring water between the closed white lips, Miss Frean was loosening the too tight clothes.

The other Girl Scouts with the assistance of Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay were keeping the crowd from coming too near.

Suddenly a tall, lank figure, with a face white as the girl's face and as the boy's make-up, joined the group of five.

The Scout Captain glanced at him indignantly.

He was the man who earlier in the perform-

ance had held the hoop aloft for the young rider to jump through.

The girl's eyelids were fluttering on her cheeks. She looked at the man and smiled.

"There is nothing the matter now, Dad, don't be frightened. Silly of me to faint, wasn't it?"

Then she stared in surprise at the two Girl Scouts and the Scout Captain.

"You are Scouts? Why, where did you come from? Thank you for being kind to me." The girl's voice was surprisingly sweet and refined. She sat up.

At this same instant the boat whistle blew.

Tory and Evan exchanged glances with Miss Frean and with each other. They must go on board, for in another ten minutes their boat would leave the wharf. Already their trip had been too long delayed, and it was impossible that the entire party should remain in the little town of Twin Mules overnight and equally impossible they should be divided.

The tall man lifted the young girl in his arms as if she had been a small child. He was awkward and frightened, but the Scout Captain saw that he was undoubtedly attached to the girl, who was probably his daughter. At present there was time for few inquiries.

"See that the little girl is kept quiet and cool and that she does not dance again for some time," Memory Frean remarked sternly. "In any case this is not suitable work or surroundings for a young girl."

The tall man made no reply.

With the girl in his arms and the boy beside him he moved off toward the gold canvas-covered wagon. The Scout Captain, the Girl Scouts, Tom and Donald hurried down the hill toward the boat landing.

After luncheon the Girl Scouts and Miss Frean retired to their tiny staterooms, leaving Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay to talk to each other and to their fellow passengers.

At four o'clock the girls and their Captain came up on deck again, as they expected to reach High Bridge by sundown and there end their river travel.

Once more the scenery became wilder and more picturesque, the river flowing between high green cliffs looked like a deep, dark tunnel.

As the sun declined a band of colored musicians appeared on board, who had come from another of the river towns. One of them possessed a beautiful tenor voice.

Conversation ceased altogether as he began

singing to the accompaniment of a banjo, a guitar and a mandolin. The words of his song were written by the colored poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar:

"Oh, the grubbin' hoe's a-rustin' in de con'nah,
An' de plow's a-tumblin' down in de fiel';
While de whippo'will's a-wailin' lak a moun'nah
When his stubbo'n hea't is tryin' ha'd to yiel'.
An' de banjo's voice is silent in de qua'ters,
D'ain't a hymn ner coon-song ringin' in de air;
But de murmur of a branch's passin' waters
Is de only soun' dat breks de stillness dere."

The sun dropped behind the mountains. The afterglow colored the water and the sky. The scenery grew more surpassingly lovely.

The boat, moving on serenely, left a silver line in its wake.

The girls were talking again but in low voices, planning the next day's journey along the open road; they were dreaming, too, lost in the surrounding loveliness.

The Scout Captain was thinking of the young girl in the circus wagon. What would become of her? She was too frail and refined for so trying a life. What was it Tom Courtenay had remarked? "Neither the girl, the man, nor the boy are Southerners. I am not sure they are Americans. No matter how

poor, Kentuckians would never descend to such an exhibition before a mixed audience."

"The older man might be a foreigner," the Scout Captain mused, but the girl and boy looked and spoke like our own country people. Has the lure of the open road impelled them to such an existence?"

Tory Drew placed a hand on her arm.

"Memory Frean, we are to reach High Bridge in half an hour. When we move round the next bend in the river we shall see the outline of the mammoth bridge. Don't trouble about the little circus girl. Hard as her fate may seem to you, she may find it filled with long stretches of beauty and romance."

CHAPTER IX

THE OPEN ROAD

THE Patrol of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing marched along the broad highway in regular formation.

Several days had passed since the close of their river journey, and they were now in the vicinity of the famous blue-grass region of Kentucky.

The countryside had undergone an autumnal rejuvenescence. It was lovely as early summer. Along the hillsides the grapes were purple and gold beneath their shelter of leaves. The heads of the rich grain were drooping with ripe seeds, while on either side of the roadway the cattle and sheep stood grazing sleepily in the rich pastures.

"It *is* blue. I never believed it, I thought it was foolish for Tom Courtenay to be always talking of it," Teresa Peterson remarked to Evan Phillips, who was marching beside her.

The Patrol was moving in columns of two, and conversation was permitted between the marching companions.

"*It* is blue! What on earth do you mean, Tessa? Are you talking of the sky or the color of my eyes? You might have made my eyes plural, since I possess *two* blue ones."

A little disdainfully Teresa shrugged her plump shoulders. The movement was almost imperceptible.

"Oh, of course I mean that the grass is really blue! Surely you have heard Tom Courtenay say that Kentucky is divided into three parts, the pennyroyal district, the bear-grass and the blue-grass!"

Teresa gave a sigh as of relief from boredom.

"I don't care a snap about scenery or whether the grass is blue or green or yellow. I think the people who rave over landscapes are pretending or putting on airs. But I do like this rich looking country and the big handsome houses better than I liked the mountains. I am sure the people are far nicer. As an example Tom Courtenay is not a bit like the boys we have known in Westhaven. He is even nicer than Donald McClain, and I once admired Donald. I do think it will be tiresome if Miss Frean does not allow us to visit Tom Courtenay's mother and father. I don't think she should decline without consulting us."

Evan laughed.

"You mean she should consult you, Tessa. Then I don't believe there would be much danger of a refusal."

Of late Evan Phillips and Teresa Peterson had developed an unlooked-for intimacy. They were not alike in temperament. Teresa was what an old-fashioned and not flattering conception of girls once called intensely feminine. Evan possessed a number of almost boyish traits of character. She was only a few months younger in years but a good deal younger in her points of view than the other girls in her Scout troop. She was deeply interested in dancing and had a delightful sense of humor. She and her mother had lived in such close companionship that Evan was not accustomed to thinking for herself. This past summer was the first time they had been separated.

Teresa's undeniable prettiness, her need for a confidant had influenced the other girl. One fact was important. When Evan entered the present Patrol of Scouts the other girls already had their close intimacies. Teresa seemed a little apart from the others; her indolence, her love of admiration and of society made her less congenial.

At present her admiration for Tom Courtenay had amused several of her companions and annoyed the others.

"Then I must be one of the pretenders, Tessa, for I do think the blue grass is lovely."

Evan glanced over the low split rail fences.

"'In spring the blue grass is most beautiful just before the seed stalks have shot upward from the flowing tufts, and while the thin, smooth, polished blades having risen to their greatest height are beginning to bend or break and fall over on themselves from sheer luxuriance. The least observant eye is now constrained to note that blue grass is the characteristic element of the Kentucky turf —the first element of beauty in the Kentucky landscape. Over the stretches of woodland pasture, over the meadows and the lawns, by the edges of turnpike and lane, in the fence corners—wherever its seed has been allowed to flourish—it spreads a verdure so soft in fold and fine in texture that it looks like a deep-lying thick-matted moss. With the passing of summer a second vigorous growth, and the landscape is covered with a verdure resembling the luxuriance of spring.'"

A little out of breath, but with her lips taking an upward curve, Evan paused.

"Good gracious, Evan Phillips, do hush! You are talking like a book. And you know how I hate clever people!"

"Poor Tessa! Yes, I was quoting, of course. Surely you have read the book Miss Frean told us to read before we set out on our trip along the Kentucky highways. It is called 'The Blue-Grass Region of Kentucky' and is by James Lane Allen. I memorized a few paragraphs so as to impress my mother. She insists I am not to think a dancer needs no education except in her feet. See what an attractive house! I wish mother and I had a home like it."

In anything so obvious as a house Teresa was interested. Besides, she was glad to have Evan change the subject, as she was not fond of books.

An old-fashioned Kentucky farmhouse sat at a comfortable distance back from the road. Between the road and the house the orchard was filled with apple trees. To the left of the house was the vineyard and to the right larger orchards. Evidently the farm was one of the famous fruit farms of the neighborhood.

The Girl Scouts of the Open Road were a little fatigued, for during the past few days they had traveled steadily, pausing only for

food and occasional short rests, striking tent about five each afternoon. The days were warm, but the nights out of doors were cool and fragrant.

At this instant the Scout Captain gave the command, "Fall Out," and the Patrol halted and broke ranks.

Teresa sighed with relief. She was not fond of long hikes, and of late it seemed to her their walks would never end. Tory Drew showed evidences of her illness in the mountain cabin and to-day the Scout Captain felt it not wise to attempt too many miles.

Teresa seated herself on a low rail fence, but a moment later sprang to her feet.

A figure on horseback was flying down the road from the farmhouse and without pausing vaulted over the gate and drew up within a few feet of the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing.

"Is this Miss Frean and her Troop of Scouts from Westhaven, Connecticut?" she asked, a little out of breath. "My name is Jane Helm. Tom Courtenay is my cousin, he and his friend are waiting for you at our house. My mother wants you to stay and have lunch with us. Please do. We have been making preparations for you ever since Tom stopped by to tell us of his strange meeting with two un-

known Girl Scouts in his mountain cabin. I am a member of a Girl Scout Troop, 'The Kentucky Cardinals.' Have I introduced myself sufficiently?"

"We are very grateful, you are more than kind," the Scout Captain answered slowly. "But there are so many of us, I am sure we would give you too much trouble." She was beginning to think that in Kentucky Tom Courtenay's hospitality was not so unusual as she had imagined.

"Oh, no, you will be doing *us* the favor. I would not let Tom come with me to invite you. I preferred inviting you myself. Mother and my sister and I love new people and here on the farm we do not meet a great many interesting ones. I have never known a Girl Scout outside my own state. It will be such fun to talk things over and compare experiences!"

The old red brick farmhouse behind its shading of apple trees appeared cool, hospitable and alluring.

The Scout Captain glanced at her group of girls.

Teresa looked fretful and tired, Tory Drew was whiter than usual, the line of her chin sharper. She had been more seriously ill in

the mountain cabin than she cared to confess. Dorothy McClain's color was less fresh and radiant. She too showed the effect of the strain of nursing. As a matter of fact, only Ann Craig, the Kentucky mountain girl who had joined the Patrol earlier in the summer, appeared as vigorous and fresh as at the hour of their departure.

The girl who was speaking had bobbed auburn hair, red-brown eyes of almost the same shade, a tanned skin with freckles on her upturned nose. Her costume consisted of a pair of khaki trousers and a soft blue linen blouse.

There was no mistaking the wish of the Patrol of Girl Scouts to accept her invitation.

"Very well, if you are sure we won't be a nuisance," the Scout Captain agreed.

The old-fashioned house had attracted her with its air of dignity and repose. One realized that it had sheltered joy and sorrow in the century of its history. The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing might never have an opportunity to enter such a home again.

Jane Helm smiled.

"Would any one of you like to ride my horse? The distance to the house is very short, but I seldom walk when I have the

chance to ride. I have kept my horse saddled for the past two hours, I was so determined you should not go by without my overtaking you. We would have been so disappointed."

Evan Phillips had never been on a horse in her life; now the wistfulness of her expression was sufficient. Assisting her to mount, Jane Helm led the way, holding the horse's bridle. The Scout Captain walked beside her, with her Patrol following.

An old collie dog, red and gold and brown as the autumn coloring, came bounding forward to meet them. Immediately behind walked Tom Courtenay and Donald McClain with a girl of about eighteen or nineteen years.

"I never saw such a lovely girl in my life! Do look, Dorothy, Donald seems completely overcome. Isn't it absurd, when he usually is so superior! I would not mind one bit if he learns a lesson," Tory whispered into Dorothy McClain's ear.

There was no opportunity for further conversation between them, as their hostess, Mrs. Helm, was also advancing to meet them. A moment later Jane was introducing her mother and sister, Katherine Helm.

Undeniably they were not unexpected guests.

On the lawn before the house under the September shadows of the trees a long table was covered with a snow white cloth and ornamented with two great bowls of fruit, purple and white grapes, red and yellow apples, a few late peaches and russet brown pears.

Unconsciously Teresa sighed with pleasure.

Mrs. Helm smiled.

"You will come into the house first and get rid of some of our Kentucky dust. Then we will have our lunch at once and talk afterwards. I am going to try to persuade you to stay for the night with us. I want to hear of your journey along the open road. It seems to me that of late only the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts have the enterprise to do the outdoor things. I would like to join you on the open road."

Upstairs Jane Helm invited Ann Craig and Tory Drew into her own bedroom, as she had taken an immediate fancy to them, although they were so unlike.

"Do persuade your Scout Captain to let you spend the night with us. One night won't make much difference in your journey! We have a fireplace in the dining-room over a hundred years old, where we can build a fire

and tell ghost stories. Of course, this old house is haunted; at least, the colored people in the neighborhood insist that it is. Please don't tell mother I mentioned the fact, as it annoys her. But it is rather fun, I think, to own a ghost!"

Jane's conversation was interrupted by the ringing of a bell.

A quarter of an hour after the long table on the lawn was occupied by the Girl Scouts and Miss Frean, their three new friends, Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay.

Dorothy kept glancing a little anxiously at her brother Donald, who seemed at present oblivious of everyone except Katherine Helm. She was beautiful but a good deal older than Donald and could think of him only as a boy. She was unlike her mother and sister, her hair was a pale gold and her eyes golden brown. She was evidently not a great talker, as she now sat quietly listening to Donald.

He was talking about himself, Dorothy surmised, which was not like Donald. But she must conquer her absurd pangs of jealousy. Her favorite twin brothers, Donald and Lance, would soon learn to care more for other girls than they cared for her; as they were sixteen perhaps the time was not far away. To-day

Donald was fascinated by a beautiful girl a good deal older whom he would soon forget.

Dorothy was sitting so that she faced the road leading from the main highway into the farm. She was close beside the Scout Captain and their hostess.

"Miss Frean, my husband is away for the day, but he will be at home to-night and disappointed if you do not stay for the night here with us. I think your girls seem a little tired and the rest will be good for them."

"Mrs. Helm, Miss Frean, I beg your pardon," Dorothy interrupted. "Here come the 'Dollivers'! Mrs. Helm, we landed the other day from our river steamboat at a little town called 'Twin Mules.' We found the 'Dollivers' there before us and giving an outdoor circus performance. There were only three of them, the father, son and daughter, and we thought the girl very unusual. You remember, don't you, Miss Frean?"

Everybody at the table looked up.

The gold-covered canvas wagon had left the main road and was moving slowly up the private road inside the Helm place.

It stopped a few yards from the luncheon table.

A tall, thin man with a curious foreign air

climbed down from the driver's seat and came forward toward Mrs. Helm.

"My daughter isn't so well and a storm is coming on. May we stay here for a time until it passes and will you tell me how to find the nearest doctor? You need not be afraid of Donna or Bob or me, we won't trouble you, ma'am, or do any harm to your place."

He turned and eyed the girls at the table with surprise and pleasure. He then made a low bow to the Scout Captain.

"Ain't you the lady who looked after my girl when she fainted during our performance the other day? I could see what you thought of me for letting her ride and dance before that crowd when she wasn't feeling extra well."

He smiled down upon Tory and Dorothy.

"Donna was awful pleased at being taken care of by Girl Scouts. She ain't talked of much else since and wanting to be a Girl Scout herself. We followed along the towpath by the river till your steamboat was out of sight. I don't suppose one of you now would go up to the wagon and speak to her; might cheer her up a lot. Ain't nothing ser'ous the trouble with her, just tired and got a cold like."

Tory, Dorothy and Jane Helm walked over at once toward the gold-covered canvas wagon.

CHAPTER X

THE STORM AND THE STORY

OUTSIDE the rain was beating down with magnificent fury; a sudden September storm had broken, flooding the fields and countryside.

Inside the long, low room a wood fire was burning. The walls of the room were covered with a queer old-fashioned blue paper. Upon shelves along the walls were pieces of old Willow and Delft china. The lamp swinging above the walnut dining-room table had the light turned down, so that only the firelight flickered and glowed, throwing fitful shadows on the faces surrounding it in a wide double circle.

Night had fallen and the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing, their Captain, Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay were still at the Helm farmhouse.

Hearing the rain and the wind about the old brick chimney, the travelers of the open road were grateful for the warmth and shelter.

They were not alone in their gratitude.

Reclining on a Morris chair was a young girl wrapped in a heavy white woolen shawl. Her face was thin, her eyes large and wistful and two bright spots of color shone on her high cheek bones. Seated beside her was a tall, thin dark man with the look of a foreigner, and behind the two a boy of about fourteen, apparently less at ease than either his father or sister.

The Dollivers also had found a refuge. Strangers as they were, with no one to vouch for them, followers of a sometimes despised profession, Mrs. Helm had not sent them forth into the storm.

"Certainly, ma'am, we shall always be that grateful to you. Seems like Bob and I could have hid the canvas wagon under the trees and made out the night, spite of the wind and rain, but with Donna not feeling any too good, it would have been hard on her, harder'n usual," Mr. Dolliver remarked, speaking in a low, confidential tone.

He was not far from Mrs. Helm and Miss Frean. In front of them and closer to the fire were half a dozen of the Girl Scouts, Tom and Donald and Jane Helm. They were sitting cross legged on sofa cushions and had been telling stories, roasting apples and popping corn.

In a low chair in the midst of them, her pale hair gleaming with silver lights, was Katherine Helm, Donald McClain beside her.

Mr. Dolliver's gaze traveled from the group to the figure of the girl in the Morris chair. In spite of her outdoor life she looked very fragile. Her hair was a curious color, as if the natural light brown had been burned to gold by the wind and sun. Her eyes, now half closed, were narrow gray eyes with the faint blue of steel. Her lips were pale and her expression almost haggard. She did not look unhappy. At this instant she appeared oblivious of herself and of her illness in her interest in her new acquaintances.

"I am afraid your daughter is not strong enough to do the work you expect of her. I felt convinced of this the other day when we saw her riding and dancing before a mixed audience of men, women and children, colored people and white, in the little town of Twin Mules. Now I am more than ever sure of the fact," Miss Frean protested. Her voice was kind and firm. Her sympathy for the girl had been aroused at their original meeting, but to-night she appreciated that no one was so unhappy over his daughter as Mr. Dolliver.

"You must forgive me," she continued,

"but you see as a Scout Captain I am especially interested in girls, and your Donna does not appear suited to the life she is leading. If I could play the part of a fairy godmother, and you need not be troubled for I cannot, I would like to persuade you to send her to some school where she could have a chance to study and be with other young girls."

The anxiety of Mr. Dolliver's face deepened. His eyelids and even his long nose twitched. He looked so like he was about to burst into tears that the Scout Captain regretted her rash advice.

"Seems as if you might be right, ma'am, but how are Bob and I to manage? Donna's our whole show. Bob and I can't earn more'n a few dollars a week between us and can't always count on that. So maybe you can tell me what to do? We'd like the best way in the world to have Donna rest and be a lady like she is and like she deserves to be. I was a trick rider once and a good one, if I do say it as shouldn't, but I had a nasty fall and I'm not as young as I was once. Don't mind telling you, since you've all been so friendly like, that this black hair and black beard of mine ain't as you might say natural. I touch 'em up a bit, as the saying is—shoe polish! Bob

is a good boy, but he ain't got much talent and started training too late; must have been five or six before his mother'd stop babying him."

A little silence had fallen upon the room and Tom Courtenay looked up curiously from his place by the fire and toward the older man.

"Would you mind telling me, are you an American?" he inquired.

Mr. Dolliver appeared more cheerful.

"Funny, young man, but people are always asking me that question! I was born in some outlandish place in eastern Europe where the gypsies hail from. Must have put the wanderlust into my blood. Still, I was a good enough American from the time I was twelve years old or so. Maybe you wouldn't never guess it but I was brought up by two spinster ladies to do chores on a little farm they owned up Vermont way. 'Pears like some of their styles of saying and doing things clings to me. I guess they stood a lot of nonsense from me first and last. They was good to me, yet somehow I couldn't stick it. A circus come to our town and I run off with it. I ain't been sorry or wanted to go back to farming. Later on I married a circus lady and Bob was born in a tent, as you might say. She was a

trapeze artist and a bareback rider and we were pretty prosperous in them days. She come of an old circus family; fact is, her family name was Dolliver, 'twasn't my name right at first. 'Twas the missus's idea we start out for ourselves, just we four in the gold-colored canvas wagon. She never wanted Donna round with the circus crowd after she began growing up."

Tom Courtenay, who had become a little cramped from sitting so long on the floor, stood with one arm resting on the mantel. He seemed suddenly interested by the circus man's conversation. The Girl Scouts were also tired of story telling and laughter and games and felt that a piece of real human history might prove more entertaining. Besides, they were interested in the little circus rider, who looked very unlike one's ordinary idea, as she sat up unexpectedly, clasping her hands tight together outside the white woolen shawl.

"Are you going to tell about me, father? Please don't, I am sure no one is interested."

Mr. Dolliver looked injured, as evidently he enjoyed repeating his family history and did not wish to be interrupted.

At this instant Tory Drew slipped from her place by the fire and sat down on the arm of the strange girl's chair.

"Do let your father say what he intended. We *are* interested to learn more of you. Have I not been repeating to you the histories of our Patrol of Girl Scouts most of the afternoon when you should have been alone and resting? Remember, you insisted you wanted to hear, first the story of the Girl Scout organization, then our individual stories. Do you mind if I ask a question?"

The new girl yielded to Tory's charm and sweetness and acquiescing sank back into her chair.

"Do you mind telling us, Mr. Dolliver, if Donna is your own daughter? Forgive my asking, but she does not look like you or your son," Tory queried.

Mr. Ignatius Dolliver hesitated and cleared his throat.

The Scout Captain glanced reproachfully at Tory. At the same time she confessed to herself that the same question had been in her own mind for some time if not upon her lips.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Dolliver at this moment was receiving the undivided attention of nearly every one in the room. He enjoyed an audience and appeared to appreciate his present one.

"Well, Donna is my own daughter in a way and in another way you might as well know the truth, she isn't. Usually she doesn't like me to tell, but you have all been so kind to us travelers, seems like she won't mind your hearing. We have been loving each other so long and I'm so proud of her, in ways she seems more like my own child than Bob. She's been closer to me than any born daughter. Donna did not come of us circus folks. Maybe it surprises you that noticed how she can ride and dance; Donna's mother and father were play-actors. Her real name is Foster. I don't know what her mother's name was 'fore she married. Shall I go on, Donna?"

Mr. Dolliver was so obviously enjoying himself and the little company so absorbed that the girl he addressed could only smile and bow her head. Tory saw her eyes cloud slightly and her lips tremble, but no one else was aware of this.

"Close as the missus and I could find out, why Donna's mother came of rich folks who looked down on acting and never forgave her when she took to the stage and married an actor. She never would talk much. Maybe I ain't telling things just straight. Bob and

Donna say that once I get to talking it's like me riding a horse backwards; I used to ride that way in the old days. Well, here's the straight of it! My wife and me and Bob (Bob was a baby) was traveling with a circus and showing for weeks at a time in big towns. We was taking in plenty of money and went to live in a pretty nice boarding house. My wife, she made friends with a young woman. She wasn't much more than a girl and was living in the same house and acting in a stock company in the same city. She had a baby, an awful cute little girl, Donna. The two women got kind of intimate like comparing the two babies. Donna's mother said how her husband had died a year before and she had been having a pretty bad time since trying to act and see to the baby. She hadn't been taught how to do things. My wife noticed this right off, though she tried hard, goodness knows! Then she took sick. Well, I don't want to say too much. It makes Donna kind of sad like and maybe you are tired hearing me talk. Donna's mother had the flu and in about forty-eight hours it was all over. My wife was with her every minute of the time she could spare and no one else. The long and short of it is, she asked us to take her baby.

She had a little money in bank, enough to see to her burying, and a few hundred over. She told my wife that her folks were rich, but she did not want them to know she had ever had a baby. She was awful young like and bitter 'cause things had gone so against her and her husband had died. She said her parents wouldn't be good to the little girl. They would always be telling her that her mother and father were no account and she must look down on them and promise never to be like them. She took on so terrible that my wife promised. They called me in and made me promise too. It didn't seem exactly fair to her own people, but somehow we couldn't refuse the poor thing. So Donna's been our girl ever since and you can see how in one way she's my daughter; then again she aint."

Mr. Dolliver reached over and stroked Donna's hair with fingers that were infinitely gentle and loving. They were curious long fingers like an artist's and not like a working man's. The boy must have resembled his mother, he was far sturdier and less gentlemanly, although he appeared well meaning and devoted. He did not show jealousy of his father's open preference for his foster sister.

"Course, it is plain enough Donna is different from Bob and me. Donna means 'lady,' you know, in Eyetalian. An Eyetalian who posed for them Greek and Eyetalian statues in the circus called her Donna when she was a little girl and Donna she has been to us ever since. Her mother had given her a sort of play acting name, Viola, but Bob and I ain't never cared much to call her anything 'cept Donna. Maybe she'll be going back to her real name some day, since she wants to be a play actress like her mother."

Mr. Dolliver sighed deeply.

"Seems like Bob and I ought to be able to make out so as to give her a chance. She has got to read books and learn an awful lot, I expect, before she can get very far ahead. But when we do our turns why maybe only a few pennies come our way. Then when Donna appears why sometimes it's quarters and half dollars and now and then a bill! You mustn't think The Dollivers show in such little backwoods places as Twin Mules more'n once or twice a year. We had gotten off our road and money was low and Donna said she did not mind. It is all the same to her, she says, so she can bring in the wherewithal for her old Dad."

Again Mr. Ignatius Dolliver's voice trembled.

Tory saw her new acquaintance flush and veil her gray eyes. She *did* care. This was self-evident, only she cared more for the father who had been so devoted, more than if she had been his own daughter perhaps.

Donna sat up now, allowing the white shawl to slip from her thin shoulders.

"Oh, I'll manage, you are not to worry," she seemed to have forgotten her other companions and to be thinking only of her troubled father.

"If my mother could act with her people hating what she wished to do and disowning her and never seeing her again, why I ought to succeed with father and Bob trying to help me in every way they can. We are on our way now to the big towns in the blue-grass country. This is the month of the county fairs and we hope to make a lot of money. In cold weather we shall settle down in a town and Bob and I go to school. We *have* several winters, haven't we, Bob, living and sleeping in our gold covered canvas wagon and father doing odd jobs?"

The circus girl was not talking to her own family but to the circle of eager, friendly faces

surrounding her, only Katherine Helm and Donald McClain appeared slightly bored. Donald was bored because he had observed the expression on the older girl's face and wished to follow her in all things at the present moment. Ordinarily he would have been as interested as the others, certainly Tom Courtenay was and he was older and had more experience of the world than Donald.

Tom left his position by the fire and came over toward the group within the group composed of the Scout Captain, Mrs. Helm, Tory Drew and the Dollivers.

He addressed himself to Donna with all the courtesy and charm of manner that Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain had grown accustomed to in their sojourn in his mountain cabin.

"Is it true you really do mean to be an actress some day? Then don't let anyone or anything discourage you. And, by the way, why don't you and your father and brother come to Lexington and give your performance? I know nearly everybody in town and you can count on my drumming up a first-rate audience. By the way, my father has a large country place. Would you like to give your circus there?"

Mr. Ignatius Dolliver and Bob looked delighted, but before either one of them could speak Donna shook her head.

"Oh, no, not before all of you; I couldn't! Before strangers it does not so much matter. Father and Bob are proud of our entertainment and they think I am ever so much better than I am, but please don't think I fail to understand how little I can do."

Donna's voice broke and she dropped her chin. Difficult to explain without wounding her father and brother that she realized what a poor group of showmen they were, who traveled along the open road, sheltered from the wind and rain and sun by the gold-covered canvas wagon.

"You must not think of what you are doing in any such fashion. Feel as if it were means to an end you intend to accomplish. Some day when you are a famous actress you will like to recall the old days of playing out of doors and the gold-covered canvas wagon. I have asked Miss Frean and the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing to visit us in Lexington. They have not consented, but I have great faith in my mother's being able to persuade them. Now the storm has kept them with Aunt Jane, they will hardly be so unkind

as to refuse to come to us. Perhaps you might—" Without finishing his speech, Tom Courtenay hesitated. Embarrassed, his face clouded, his handsome forehead drew together in a heavy frown.

Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain gazed at him in surprise and consternation. Never in their days together in the little mountain cabin had he revealed this side of his nature. He always had been amiable and agreeable. They had recognized that he was spoiled and accustomed to having his way, but he had been too considerate a host to make them uncomfortable. The present Tom Courtenay was a more difficult person.

"I am afraid Donna won't be able to ride or dance for some time. She does not seem strong enough," Mrs. Helm answered gently. "I was about to suggest that she go to bed. Even if her severe headache has passed off and the doctor thinks she is only overtired, the strain of a performance in Lexington would be too severe. I don't believe your mother would be influenced in the way you desire, Tom dear. Indeed, the effect might be in the opposite direction."

Tom Courtenay turned and without even a pretense of saying good-night, left the room.

Dorothy McClain, who was sitting beside Jane Helm, unconsciously uttered an exclamation of surprise. She had not liked all of Tom Courtenay's characteristics, but she had been deeply impressed by his good manners and a little ashamed of her own in comparison. To-night his behavior left a good deal to be desired.

To her amazement she observed that Jane's red-brown eyes were shining with amusement, although her expression was not unsympathetic.

She leaned over to whisper.

"Didn't my cousin, Tom Courtenay, confide to you the secret of his life? I am surprised when you were ten days in the same place and he seems to like you especially. Tom's ardent desire is to become an actor. He wants to stop college and go upon the stage at once. His mother and father are dreadfully opposed to the idea. Aunt Patricia won't hear of it. She says if Tom isn't a great lawyer, as all her family have been, she will never be able to bear the disappointment. So you see he is interested in a perfectly strange girl and her absurd father because he heard them speak of acting and stage people. It is awfully silly, when Tom

has every opportunity. He will have a great deal of money if he behaves himself. Aunt Patricia seems to think the stage a family disgrace, just as Donna's mother's family seem to have done. Truth is that Tom and Patricia had an argument with regard to his quitting college and Tom rushed off to his cabin to escape from the discussion. He claims he wanted to get away from society and girls; and he may have *partly*. Aunt Patricia thinks that society distracts people from their troubles. My sister has the same idea. Are you tired? You must be. Well, father will be coming home soon. He has been spending the day in Frankfort and I suppose the storm has delayed him. The storm does not sound so severe. You and Tory Drew and Ann Craig are to sleep in the room with me. Perhaps I can tell you our family ghost story, the ghost story of this old house. Mother would not mind my repeating it to you, it is so improbable. She was not willing to have me tell everybody to-night for fear some one might be nervous. It is a very tragic story."

There was a little stir among the group about the fire.

Footsteps were heard in the hall, and the

door opened and Mr. Helm entered. He did not appear surprised as one might have anticipated upon beholding an entirely strange collection of people about his own fireside.

With an inquiring expression his eyes turned from his wife to Mr. Dolliver. He smiled upon the Patrol of Girl Scouts.

CHAPTER XI

A SPECTRE

THE storm apparently was past; although deep clouds were still in the sky, the moon was showing through them.

Tory Drew lay upon the edge of the bed gazing out into the night and grateful for the warmth and shelter. In times past she would have enjoyed the idea of sleeping under a dripping tent near the border of the open road. But since her illness in the mountain cabin she had not felt so well as she pretended to the Scout Captain and the girls. During the past few days of marching along the highway with the arching canopies of trees overhead and the meadows and fields near by golden with harvests, she had made a pretense to an enthusiasm she could not force herself to feel. Her feet lagged, her head ached, not violently, scarcely enough to mention, but with a kind of dull throbbing, due chiefly to weariness.

At present she was unable to sleep. This

was not surprising, since the big bedroom was occupied by three other girls, and conversation had not ceased for a moment since they retired for the night.

Tory, by her own request occupied a cot by the window. Dorothy McClain and Jane Helm were sleeping in Jane's own four-poster mahogany bed, Ann Craig lay on a trundle bed beside them.

Occasionally Ann's quiet breathing attested the fact that she had dropped off to sleep, but Dorothy and Jane seemed able to talk endlessly. Not that Tory was less interested, only to-night for several reasons she chose to listen with only infrequent comment.

Apparently Jane Helm had not often confidants of girls of her own age, and intended making the most of her present opportunity.

Already she had added a good many details to her story of her cousin, Tom Courtenay.

Tory was surprised by the number of questions Dorothy asked and by her disapproval. Her own brother Lance was studying to become a professional pianist and what was the difference between acting and playing before an audience?

"I don't understand Tom Courtenay's failing to mention his ambition to us," Dorothy

protested, more to herself than to her companions, "I thought we talked of everything under the sun in the days we were in his cabin. I remember now, Jane, that he allowed Tory and me to talk of our interest in Scouting most of the time."

"Oh, well, let us not discuss Tom any more," Jane answered. "If he carries out his plan and your Scout Captain accepts his invitation, you will probably be taken into his confidence. I suppose you know he had included Katherine and me in his invitation and mother has agreed. The Lindens is a wonderful place. You say you like our old farm but it is very simple in comparison. Our house is old and Tom's father built theirs only a few years ago."

Jane yawned and then sat upright.

"By the way, it must be nearly time to go to sleep and I have never told you our ghost story. I am the only member of the family who is proud of the ghost. Father and mother insist it is all nonsense and Katherine is nervous, although she won't say so. Katherine and I are not in the least alike."

"Yes, I have observed the fact," Dorothy answered. "I can see your sister cares more for boys than for girls. She is much more

interested in Donald and Tom Courtenay than in Girl Scouts."

By the window Tory Drew turned from looking at the beauty of the night outside to remark sleepily:

"Hurry and tell your ghost story, Jane, since it seems to be upon your mind and if you are sure your mother will not object. We have been breaking our Scout rules shockingly to-night. I am afraid we shall have to confess to Miss Frean if she does not suspect the worst when she sees us in the morning. It is just as well Ann Craig is asleep. Ghosts and Ann have little in common, she is such a brave out-of-doors person. I told you she had only joined our Scout troop this summer and is returning to spend the winter in Westhaven with our Scout Captain. She is a native of your Kentucky mountains. It is odd to find such a difference in people separated by only a few miles and a few mountains."

"Yes, I know, strangers are always speaking of it," Jane returned with no special show of interest. "I think I have learned most of your histories, including the mystery of Donna Foster, otherwise Viola Foster, otherwise Dolliver. Father was slightly suspicious of Mr. Dolliver, I believe. In any case he sug-

gested that he and his son sleep over the barn, the bedrooms are quite comfortable. Donna has a little bedroom to herself near mother's in case she is not well in the night. You see, mother is the female Good Samaritan brought up to date, at least this is what my father calls her. I'll apologize to Miss Frean in the morning for breaking the Scout rules and tell my ghost story quickly. Fact is, it is a Girl Scout ghost story and this is my chief reason for wishing to confide it to you."

Jane clasped her two hands over her knees and began rocking quietly back and forth, now neither tired nor sleepy, but apparently enjoying herself tremendously. However, she had not been tramping for the past few days along the beautiful Kentucky highways in the two sections of the country where the pennyroyal and the blue-grass districts meet.

"A Girl Scout ghost story, Jane Helm! I utterly decline to believe it, although I apologize for doubting you!" Dorothy murmured. She and Jane seemed to have established a special liking for each other. They were both free from affectations and devoted to outdoor life. "There is one tribute that can always be paid Girl Scouts, we are sensible and practical. We leave fanciful and frivolous amuse-

ments to other groups of girls. A Girl Scout ghost strikes me as fanciful and frivolous. Besides, the Girl Scout organization is not old enough to have produced a ghost. What is the name of the Ghost's Scout Troop and does she wear a ghostly insignia upon her sleeve?"

Tory giggled, and Ann was sufficiently awakened to rise upon one elbow and gaze curiously at the two white-robed figures in the four-poster bed.

"Laugh if you like," Jane returned as one who was sure of victory. "It happens I told this same story of our ghost at a state meeting of the Girl Scouts at the Capital. There she was voted a pioneer Kentucky scout. I did not mention her ghost-like behavior then, I merely referred to it lightly. I only told her history, which goes back as far as the Civil War."

"Well, Jane, go ahead, I am beginning to be interested in your ghost if she represents a romance," Tory Drew urged, turning again from the beauty of the outside world that she could see through her open window, although the moon shone more brilliantly and the clouds rushed past as if blown by many winds in the high heavens.

So often Tory found herself torn between

her interest in human beings and her joy in the beauties of nature. She envied Dorothy McClain, who insisted people entertained her far less than sports and Girl Scout tests. Of late she had not been convinced that Dorothy was not mistaken, observing her keen concern in Tom Courtenay's history.

Jane leaned her chin upon her hand.

The moonlight played about her white figure and the short auburn hair. It transformed her rather matter-of-fact face, with its brilliant coloring and short, eager nose, into a countenance more spirituelle and eerie.

Dorothy remained sunk amid her white pillow, while Ann Craig again relaxed, although wide awake and interested.

"The story *is* a romance and a tragic one. You will soon see why my ancestress, Jeanne Helm, may be truly called a pioneer Girl Scout. Of course you must remember that in the days before the Civil War it was difficult to predict whether Kentucky would join the side of the Union or the South. Since the great European war, the Civil War does not appear so important. But I expect there never was a war where there was such bitterness and dreadful family quarrels. My heroine was my grandmother's older sister.

My grandmother only died a few years ago and used to talk to me about the lovely Jeanne, for whom I was named. Horrid, wasn't it, to be called Jane instead; but mother's name was also Jane and father insisted he preferred plain homespun names to French ones. Let's see, I don't know just where to begin! Oh yes, now do try to get this clear, because it is most important. My great-grandfather was a southern sympathizer. He was more than that, he wanted Kentucky to secede from the Union and he undertook to use all his influence to this end. As soon as war was declared my great-uncle, his only son, joined General John Morgan of Lexington, a cousin of Tom Courtenay's by the way, on his mother's side. You see, we are still interested in relations in Kentucky. You probably do not know, but General Morgan was one of the handsomest and most daring soldiers of the war. He rode with his cavalry through this part of the state and nearly all the young men in the neighborhood joined his regiment. Our entire family were rebels and proud to be called rebels, except one person, Jeanne. She was eighteen then and lovely as Katherine. Grandmother used to tell me that she was

even more beautiful because she had a sweeter nature. Every young man in the neighborhood was in love with her as they are with my sister Katherine. When war was finally declared she was engaged. She broke off her engagement when her fiancé refused to try to keep Kentucky from seceding. Instead he hurried off to Virginia and joined a rebel troop. Now for the Girl Scout portion of my story! With every member of her family against her and in a day when southern women were never supposed to raise their voices outside their homes, she went about everywhere pleading with Kentuckians to save the Union. She found out various important facts and somehow got messages through to Washington. My grandmother was a little girl at the time and was never certain of the details. One important fact she did remember. Her mother and father learned what Jeanne was doing and were angry and heart-broken. They regarded her as a spy in their own home. She was a kind of Jeanne d'Arc in a way, although only a few people know her history. She told her parents that love for the United States was stronger than her love for them. She said the South would fail, but that much blood would be spilled and the

whole South devastated. She could not see her own state suffer the same fate. Seems odd, doesn't it? I am not a bit of a heroine, I don't suppose heroines repeat themselves in families like geniuses, do you?"

"Oh, how is anyone to know, Jane? Please go on!" Tory ejaculated. "Your story is tragic, whether or not we believe in your ghost. Poor Jeanne! It seems an unfortunate name. I would rather be Jane if I were you."

"Well, there was nothing to do, in the face of such defiance, but to lock Jeanne in her own room and set some one as a guard to keep her from escaping. She declared that she would get away if it were possible and continue to work and pray harder than ever for the Union."

"We-uns would like to be such a Girl Scout!" Ann Craig remarked so unexpectedly that her three companions were startled. She scarcely had spoken a dozen words since they retired for the night. In Ann Craig's mountain district the men were all loyal Unionists, and perhaps she possessed the same Girl Scout instincts.

"One night in a storm like to-night there was a sudden noise outside the house. A band

of northern soldiers had surrounded it. Jeanne's family believed that she had betrayed her own father. He was accused of aiding the South. He grew angry, and I don't know what happened exactly, but he was killed. My grandmother ordered her daughter to leave the house that night and never allowed her to come back. Jeanne went north and nursed the Union soldiers, but was always writing and praying to be forgiven. She returned to this neighborhood when the war was over, but no one of the family ever saw her and she died soon after. Do you wonder that she is supposed to come back night after night begging to be taken indoors and wearing the same white frock she wore on the night she was driven forth by her own mother?"

Jane's voice trembled.

"It may be my imagination, of course, but I really think I have seen her twice. At least, I have seen a white figure cross the lawn and try all the doors of the house without a sound and then vanish."

"Good gracious, Jane, what a dreadful story! What induced you to tell us? I would not have listened if I had dreamed what it was to be," Tory Drew protested.

She had a headache before, but this gruesome tale had increased her discomfort physically and mentally. She possessed more imagination and was more keenly sensitive than her companions.

"Oh, well, I presume it is a rather sad story, but I have heard it so often I never think of anything much save the ghostly part. Do you believe I could have seen the ghost?"

Dorothy McClain's firm hand reached forth and drew her hostess backward.

"Do try not to be so absurd, Jane Helm, and allow us a little time to sleep. There never was a ghost and there never will be one seen by material eyes. I suppose your Jeanne was a gallant Girl Scout, but it all happened so long ago. I can't get up a great deal of emotion on the subject. Besides, I did not hear more than half the tale, I was asleep the rest of the time. Ann Craig, in spite of her early enthusiasm, is gently snoring. Please, not another single word from anyone tonight!"

Half offended and yet willing to go to sleep at last, Jane relaxed. In less than three minutes three of the four girls were wrapped in profound slumber.

Tory endeavored to follow their example,

but was really too weary to sleep. She had found sleeping difficult for the past few nights after their long hours of tramping along the open road. To-night her hostess's determined conversation had fatigued her more than ever. Besides, her story of the Jeanne who had slept beneath this same roof and suffered so deeply for the love of her country was disquieting.

Tory found herself wondering what sacrifices modern Girl Scouts would be willing to make for such a cause.

A question so impossible to answer made her more than ever restless.

Tory sat up in bed. The next instant she was on the floor and crossing the few feet of space to the open window, where the glory of the night would distract her from idle thinking.

The old farm lay peaceful and serene. Beyond the back yard with its bright beds of autumn flowers stood a large barn. In an upper window Tory thought she could see a light. This was probably the room Jane had mentioned occupied by Mr. Dolliver and Bob.

Her glance fell to the ground beneath her window. Moving in a shaft of light was the figure of a girl with fair hair and in a white gown.

Tory's face whitened and her heart beat

perilously fast. Then she rallied and her common sense and Scout training came to her aid. She was not by any chance beholding a ghost, for some unknown reason one of the girls in the old farmhouse had wandered outdoors in her night dress. Curious, when it was now long past midnight!

Tory leaned out farther. If the girl were one of her own Patrol of Scouts she was deeply interested. They were being entertained by strangers and must in no way annoy or alarm their hosts. Should she try to find the Scout Captain? The house was an unknown one and she did not know how to discover Miss Frean without arousing the household.

Tory placed a heavy coat about her shoulders and tiptoed out of the room. She might have wakened Dorothy or Ann Craig, but this would have aroused Jane Helm. Curiously she wished Jane not to know. If she really believed in her ghostly ancestress she would be alarmed.

CHAPTER XII

THE CALL

TORY got downstairs and out the front door without disturbing anyone. Immediately she moved quietly and quickly as possible around the side of the house, keeping within the shadow of the wall. Finally she reached the moonlit open space at the back.

She could still see the figure of the girl walking slowly and unhesitatingly toward the barn. Here Mr. Helm kept a dozen horses as well as a large supply of grain and hay. Tory had paid a visit to the barn toward the late afternoon, as Jane Helm was in the habit of feeding her own riding horse, and had asked Tory to accompany her.

Upon a second view of the mysterious figure Tory remained mystified. A few steps nearer and to her relief she recognized not one of her own Patrol of Scouts, but the girl of the gold-covered canvas circus wagon.

She wore only her nightgown and the white woolen shawl which had been wrapped about

her shoulders since her arrival. Her feet were bare. Her hair, which reached about to her shoulders, was partly braided and partly unbound.

Tory hesitated. Had the ghostly visitant been one of her own friends, she would have gone to her at once and demanded an explanation of her behavior. But the present girl was an acquaintance of the open road. What did she know concerning her but the fanciful and somewhat to be doubted story told by her foster father? Undoubtedly she was going to him at this late hour of the night. Was she ill and lonely or did she wish to impart some information which would not wait for the coming of day?

Tory, in spite of her imaginative quality, was not ordinarily distrustful. She was too intelligent and too kind. Yet at this moment she was uncomfortable and puzzled. What must she do? There was but little time in which to reach a decision as the other girl continued toward her goal. So far apparently she remained unaware that she was being watched.

What Girl Scout rules met the present situation? Tory smiled whimsically. All the training of one's life failed at critical

moments to announce in exact formula what one must or must not do. One had to depend upon the character and intelligence built up by the discipline and experience.

Without the shadow of a doubt she and Miss Frean and the Girl Scouts of her own Patrol owed every consideration to their host and hostesses. With only Tom Courtenay's introduction and because they were Girl Scouts they were being treated with every courtesy and kindness.

Surely "the Dollivers" owed an even deeper debt of gratitude! Rarely in their gypsy life could these three followers of the open road have met with such hospitality. The sudden storm and the slight illness of the girl had induced Mrs. Helm to offer them shelter and entertainment as well.

Tory felt a shiver of distaste. What could have influenced the girl, now only a few feet away from her, to slip out of her bed at midnight? She was breaking the laws of good manners. Then it occurred to Tory that Donna could have had but little training and that the surprising suavity of Mr. Dolliver was probably a cloak.

Yet Tory Drew had been attracted by the delicate figure ahead of her. She had been

mystified by her gentleness and refinement, and until this moment had believed her romantic story. In any case she wished her only good fortune.

Moving a little more swiftly, Tory laid her hand gently on the other girl's arm, at the same time calling her by name.

Before the name had more than passed her lips, she appreciated that the mystery was partly explained and the other girl was asleep.

A shudder passed over her, her eyelids fluttered above her wide open eyes. Her breath came in little broken gasps, and through her thin sleeve Tory found that her arm was hot and twitching nervously.

Suddenly she was wide awake and staring first at her unexpected companion and then at the moonlit stretch of yard, the red brick farmhouse a century old, and the tall barn painted as nearly as possible the same color.

"You must have been walking in your sleep," Tory explained. "Fortunately I was wakeful and saw you from an open window. I was puzzled and thought you might be one of my friends. I am glad I came down and wakened you without anyone's knowing You might have been seriously hurt. Have you ever done this before? I have heard of people

who walk in their sleep but I have never seen anyone. I am glad I did not frighten you."

"Yes, but I am frightened," the other girl answered. "I suppose I must have been dreaming; I thought my father was in danger and was calling to me. You may not believe me, I know that it sounds like nonsense, but this has happened two or three times before and always he *has* been in danger. How could I have managed to get out of doors in a strange house? And what, what will all of you think of me? Do you suppose we could get back without anyone seeing us? I will try to explain to Mrs. Helm in the morning. She has been so kind, suppose she happens not to trust me! I could see that Mr. Helm was troubled and suspicious of my father. If I could only make you understand that he is one of the kindest and gentlest of human beings and absolutely honest. He is like a child, I know, and likes to talk about himself and Bob and me. I must not keep you here in the cold. Thank you a thousand times! Do you think it best I tell Mrs. Helm to-night? You see, my room is next hers on the ground floor and I must have walked straight out the front door. I wonder if I could have unlocked the door. Why—"

Tory had considered her companion nervous and unstrung a few moments before, but it was as nothing to her present collapse. Donna almost sank down to the ground.

"You don't suppose, and yet it does look like—" She was in tears. "Could Mr. or Mrs. Helm believe I unlocked the door and was going to father so that he might come into the house?"

Tory placed her arms about the other girl's shoulders. During her experience as a Girl Scout she had come in contact with a number of girls in various states of emotional excitement. She possessed the twin gifts of sympathy and understanding. Her own momentary doubt of Donna, brought on by the night, her own nervousness and sleeplessness, and Jane Helm's tragic story, had completely vanished. Her companion was a girl like herself, but life had been more difficult for her and she was extremely sensitive and unstrung.

"Don't be absurd, Donna! No one will suspect you of anything except what is true and what I can bear witness to. If Mrs. Helm hears us it will be best that we explain the situation at once. If she does not, I will awaken Jane and tell her. In the morning we can relate the mystery of my ghost to the

entire household. I suppose you can imagine that I thought you were a ghost for an instant. Come, we are both nearly frozen, let us go indoors. I am afraid you will be ill in the morning and I know your father expects to start forth again on his journey. I believe we are to remain for another twenty-four hours. We may never see each other again, never on such a wonderful night and never under such strange circumstances. Let us look around us."

With her arm about the other girl's shoulders Tory gazed once more at the sky; the clouds had become more translucent, the moon a passing splendor. She breathed deeply the odors of the wet earth and the aromatic fragrances of the September flowers.

"Even an old barn is lovely in the moonlight!" she exclaimed. "I have been impressed by the fact that the barns are larger than the homes in the Kentucky farming country. I suppose it is a sign of prosperity. How bright the moon shines there on the left corner of the barn! But how cold you are! It is selfish of me to go on talking! Memory Frean, our Scout Captain and my best beloved friend, insists that beauty makes me a little mad."

Tory dragged at her companion's arm, but Donna remained immovable, and showed no faintest sign of moving toward the shelter of the house. Inclined to be irritable when she was overexcited or overtired, Tory felt a wave of irritation at this moment. If need be she would go indoors and leave the other girl to stay out all night alone if she desired. For her own part, she had probably already taken cold and might have to be in bed next day.

Tory started toward the house alone, under the impression that Donna would follow, but instead she heard her cry out with surprise and alarm. Then her voice became quiet and controlled.

"I was not mistaken, the lower end of the barn is on fire. My father and brother are sleeping in the rooms above. What shall we do? We must give the alarm."

Tory Drew's first reaction was the thought that her companion had become delirious. She was frightened. What a ridiculous story she had confided to her a few moments before, her own premonition of disaster to her father. Tory had no faith in psychic marvels. People were too fond of claiming mysterious gifts. However, curiosity impelled a casual second glance toward the moonlit barn.

Her companion was not mistaken. The crimson glow was not a reflection from the moon, for already little spurts of smoke were breaking through and tiny tongues of flame.

Tory felt instantly calm and wide awake.

Early in the afternoon she had observed a great bell near the kitchen door of the farmhouse and inquiring the reason for its presence was told the bell was to summon the men in case of need.

She ran quickly toward the house and an instant later the clamor broke forth.

CHAPTER XIII

SO AS BY FIRE

CLINGING to her Scout Captain's arm, Tory Drew realized that never before had she felt more thrilled or more useless.

Now the yard was filled with moving figures, yet her eyes remained fastened on the flame-lit splendor of the burning barn.

Less than a moment after the ringing of the great bell, Mr. Helm himself had answered the alarm. A short time after the four colored men who worked on the place and had their cabins near by appeared. In hastily donned costumes Mrs. Helm, Jane Helm and the Girl Scouts poured forth from the house. Soon after Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay followed, prepared for service. To Donna and to Tory shortly it looked as if people sprang up everywhere. Of the household only Katherine Helm lingered until she was properly and becomingly dressed.

At this instant Tory clutched Miss Frean's arm. The volunteer fire company composed

of neighbors was rushing into the yard with a great tooting of motor horns. Straightway they were at their task and yet still the barn flared on.

Now there were other and more tragic noises, the neighing and snorting of the horses that were inside the burning inclosure.

"Jane says her father does not care about the loss of the barn if only the horses can be saved! Jane is weeping her eyes out over her own horse," Tory whispered, "but Donna has never moved or spoken. Their old circus horse was put in the barn for the night, and I expect the Dolliver circus will be an even sorrier performance with the solitary horse that draws the gold-covered canvas wagon gone. It is the horse Donna rides when they are giving an exhibition. Do you believe the fantastic story her queer father told us?"

The Scout Captain nodded.

"Why not? We have no reason to disbelieve it, Tory dear, and I think we ought not to think people untruthful without reason. I told you from the moment I saw the girl I was puzzled and attracted by her. She does seem so different from the man and boy, and yet this does not necessarily mean they are not of the same blood. One sometimes sees

an equal unlikeness in persons of the very same family. I am afraid Donna is not thinking of their horse, she must be worried over her father and brother."

Tory frowned and bit her lips.

"They came out of the barn the moment after we rang the bell. I saw Donna run toward her father and throw her arms about his neck as if she never intended to let go. I have something strange to tell you when there is time. You don't know how Donna and I chanced to find out the barn was on fire, do you?"

Memory Frean shook her head.

She was looking not at Tory but at the girl standing a few yards away, a slender, solitary figure in a thin white gown with a heavy woolen shawl drawn tightly about her.

"Mr. Dolliver and Bob have both gone back into the barn to attempt to bring out the horses," she explained. "It is curious, no animal is so frightened by a fire as a horse, and it makes it so difficult to manage them."

Tory shivered.

"Don't you think we ought to go and stand by Donna? She is such a stranger. Of course the Helms are at home and the Girl Scouts have you and one another."

Tory's speech ended with a little gasp of admiration and of terror.

A fresh wind had sprung up. The clouds still sped by, but seen through the moist atmosphere they were lighted like Aurora's famous chariot and steeds. A tongue of flame was bursting through the roof of the barn.

Mr. Helm's voice could be heard above the uproar.

"Move back, everybody. Don't crowd so close. Danger!"

Tory and the Scout Captain took a few steps toward the girl they had been discussing.

They had seen her stiffen and then run forward, plainly not intending to obey the recent command.

"Donna," the Scout Captain called, warningly, speaking as she would have spoken to one of her own Girl Scouts and for the moment unaware that the strange girl was not under her guardianship. She understood at once that fear had made Donna deaf and blind and unconscious of her own danger.

At any second now the barn might collapse. She could not be sure, but she had not seen her father and brother come forth. Were they somewhere amid the excited crowd?

The wind blew more fiercely, but fortunately away from the Helm homestead. Hundreds of flying sparks illuminated the night.

In and out among the little crowd the girl, Donna, managed to make her way with astonishing quickness. No one seemed to observe her save Tory Drew and Miss Frean. They were not close enough to stop her. Now and then she seemed to pause for half an instant to search for one or the other of the two persons she hoped to find.

Then she was standing alone in a cleared space. No human being was near. There was a confusion of shouts, warnings and directions.

Tory and the Scout Captain were at once frightened and proud. It had seemed to-night that there was no work for the Girl Scouts to undertake, no way in which they could render aid. The business of rescue, if it were possible, must be left to the men. They were gathered for that purpose and to intrude even to offer help would be to make the situation more perilous and uncertain.

Now at the same instant Tory and Memory Frean observed Tom Courtenay and Dorothy McClain dart out from the crowd toward the solitary figure. They came from opposite

directions, yet reached Donna at the same time. Together they brought her back toward the fringe of onlookers and Dorothy stood with her arm close about the girl, as if to prevent her from darting forward a second time.

Why were the bystanders so silent and attentive?

Mr. Helm stood within a few yards of his barn, but no one was with him. Evidently he had ordered everyone else away for some purpose. He was in no present danger, yet Tory and the Scout Captain could hear Jane Helm crying and her mother trying to comfort her. An expectancy that was part curiosity and part awe had stilled the little throng.

Tory could only cling closer to her beloved friend's arm, waiting as if a curtain were about to be lifted upon the thrilling act of a play. This scene was not acting but reality and the more thrilling.

The double barn doors had fallen in and now formed a pathway of burning embers. The damp hay that had caused the conflagration smouldered and then burned as if it were a thousand tongues of fire. Above the roaring of the fire the stamping and snorting of the horses could still be heard.

A boy ran forth, not leading, but dragging a horse at the end of a short rope. The little crowd broke into a cheer.

The boy was Donna's brother, Bob Dolliver.

Through the increasing smoke and flame another man emerged, one of the colored stable boys. At the sight of the crowd or for whatever reason, the horse he was rescuing broke away and rushed back inside the barn. The man himself fell, overcome with the smoke and exhaustion. Two of his friends carried him to his own cabin.

Still the group of men and women and girls stood waiting.

Mr. Helm was again shouting. Only the few persons standing near could understand what he was saying. Neither Tory nor the Scout Captain could distinguish a word above the crackling and sputtering of the fire. Certainly it never had burned brighter or flared higher than at this instant.

Suddenly there was a new tumult.

The group of watchers instinctively moved a few steps farther back. Above the other noises one could distinctly hear the pounding of the feet of not one, but several horses. Again it seemed as if a curtain unrolled. Certainly for the moment the smoke and

flames curled upward. Through the burning opening where the barn doors had been, three horses rushed forth, blindfolded and driven by a tall, thin man with a foreign appearance. He was standing upon the broad back of a former circus horse and cracking a long whip.

"Good gracious, Memory Frean, Mr. Dolliver is doing one of his circus acts!" Tory Drew exclaimed. And then half laughing and half crying, "Is he amusing or heroic?"

There was no question with regard to the success of his act. Circumstances made it appear even more dramatic than Mr. Ignatius Dolliver could have anticipated. As the four horses and their driver reached safe ground, the barn itself gave way and the walls collapsed inward.

Half an hour later Tory Drew entered the small room adjoining Mrs. Helm's. She was carrying a tray with a bowl of soup and crackers. Daylight was approaching. Downstairs the Girl Scouts and the Scout Captain were assisting Mrs. Helm and Jane Helm in preparing food for their neighbors and guests. The fire had speedily burned itself out and at present there were only a few smoldering embers. No one seemed to wish to return home. Sleep seemed out of the question

and they preferred discussing the evening's adventures.

Tory found the little girl of the gold-covered canvas circus wagon sitting up in bed with her chin resting on her clasped hands. The white woolen shawl that had never been cast aside all evening was still about her shoulders. She looked less ill and haggard than Tory had expected to find her. As a matter of fact, she was smiling. She had turned on the electric light near her bed so there was no mistaking the fact.

"Your father and brother are downstairs in the kitchen having supper. Mrs. Helm says you are not to worry. They seem not to have been injured. Your father's clothes were burned and his hands are a little singed. He says the burns are not worth attention, but Mrs. Helm insists on taking care of him. She wants you to try to eat this if you will. You were ill or you would never have stopped at the farm and you may be worse after such an adventure."

Donna took the offering.

"Yes, I am hungry, thank you. Won't you stay and talk to me a moment or must you hurry to bed? You and I ought to be equally worn out. I am not troubled. My father

has been in to see me and we had a few minutes' conversation. You know he is enjoying himself. He likes an audience and adores being a hero. He used always to have people applauding him and saying how brave and fine he was. And now he can no longer do his old circus acts it has been awfully hard for him to give up and play second fiddle to Bob and me. Yet you must not misunderstand me, he is as brave as possible and would have done just what he did with no one looking on."

Tory sat down upon the edge of the bed.

"In any case it was perfectly thrilling, everyone has agreed. We have all concluded it was a piece of good fortune, our meeting in such a strange fashion, travelers, all of us, along the open road. Mrs. Helm insists we must remain a few days and learn to know one another better. As soon as you finish eating I must say good-night. The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing send you their greetings and good wishes."

CHAPTER XIV

AN AUTUMN HILLSIDE

TWO girls were sitting upon a rise of ground looking down into the orchard. The earth beneath the trees was covered with scarlet and golden fruit, the air was pungent with the odors of ripening and decaying vegetation. Not far off was a charred mass of embers where a barn had stood. The house itself was shadowy in the late afternoon sunshine.

"I shall come back to Kentucky some day, now that the other girls of my Scout Patrol and the Scout Captain have gone to Mammoth Cave, leaving us behind. I seemed to have missed a good many of the pleasures of our journey, but suppose I should not complain. Dorothy McClain and I had the eventful ten days in the mountain cabin with Tom Courtenay, and except for Tom we should never have been invited to the Helm farm, and then I should never have known you, Donna."

"Yes, that would have been a misfortune!" The other girl smiled. "I am sorry you were

ill after our night of excitement and sorry I have been a nuisance. But it has been wonderful, having this chance to talk to you with the other girls away. I suppose you cannot even realize what an odd life I have led. I have never known any girls, never stayed more than a few moments at a time in any single place, and never been to school with any regularity. I have tried to study and read as we have traveled along the open road in the canvas wagon. But so much of my time and strength has to be given to learning to dance and ride and jump through paper hoops, there isn't much opportunity for other things. When I was a little girl I did not seem to mind, but of late I have hated everything about it. Sometimes I feel I cannot go on. I have been feeling this since we came to the farmhouse and Mr. and Mrs. Helm have been so kind and treated father and Bob and me as if we were really human beings and not circus clowns. Do you dream what I would give this afternoon if I could be a Girl Scout and learn what you know and lead the sort of life you lead? I would give ten years of my own life. Indeed, I would give a good deal more of it as I don't care a snap about living except for father."

Tory frowned and was silent.

She knew a great many girls and was constantly meeting new ones through her membership and interest in the Scouts. Because she possessed imagination and sympathy more frequently to her than to her friends the new girls confided their histories and their ambitions. In her present companion, she was seeing a unique side of the tragic-comedy of existence. She had known discontentment and rebellion. She had felt both herself, when compelled to give up her wandering life in Europe with her artist father to dwell in the small town of Westhaven with her old maid aunt and old bachelor uncle, Miss Victoria Fenton and Mr. Richard Fenton. In her own Patrol of Scouts, Joan Peters was troubled by her father's inability to make a success among his many inventions, by poverty and the effort to try to make ends meet. Louise Miller was studious and awkward and unappreciated by her pretty, small-minded mother and harassed father. Teresa Peterson longed for beauty and ease and refinement, and notwithstanding her father's wealth found none of her desires satisfied in her own home.

Hastily at this moment Tory Drew was reviewing her own past and the past of the

girls with whom she was most intimately and closely associated. No one of them had a problem to meet in the least like the problem of the girl beside her. What could Donna do to escape from so uncongenial a career? She must continue to support the foster father who was so devoted to her, and she knew nothing except what he had taught her. One could scarcely imagine the boy, Bob, ever being able to do more than support himself. Yet it required an effort to associate her present companion with the gold-covered canvas wagon, bearing the flaring title, "The Dollivers," or with the dust and heat and crowds in the streets and the poor little circus performance.

Tory stole a glance at the profile near her. Donna was white and fragile as a wayside lily. One might imagine Ann Craig, the girl from the Kentucky mountains who had joined their Patrol at the close of the summer in Mystery Valley, facing a crowd, indifferent and defiant. Tory remembered to have seen Ann on a day when the river was about to flood the valley. She had been superb. She had done her work and failed to pay any attention to the throng about her, save when it was necessary to command or coax them.

Donna, whose actual name was not Donna but Viola Foster, from Shakespeare's lovely heroine, was of no such caliber.

"You can be a Girl Scout if you wish," Tory answered, brushing aside for the instant the more important and more difficult issue. "The mere fact that you travel about with your father and brother and earn your living and theirs by riding and dancing, does not in any way prevent you from being a Girl Scout. When Miss Frean comes back to the farm I'll ask her to give you the tenderfoot test or at least to prepare you for it. I have a Scout manual that I always carry with me in case any one might like to see it. May I give it to you? You can read it as you travel and wait your chance for taking the Scout tests. I know Memory Frean will be interested to help you in any way possible. She says you attract her more than any girl she has seen in a long time. I think she is sorry for you."

Tory flushed, ordinarily she was not tactless, but her final speech was not discriminating.

Her companion, however, did not appear offended. She seemed not to have heard. She was not looking down into the orchard but at the quiet, lovely farmhouse set with serene dignity amid its shading of old trees

and representing everything she had missed in life.

"Do you know I often think my mother's girlhood was spent in some sheltered place like this. She must have hated it and broken away from the restraint and the dullness. Sometimes I think I should dearly love it," Donna murmured.

She was talking to her not half so much as to herself, Tory appreciated. Notwithstanding, she felt impelled to reply.

"You would tire of it too, Donna, don't you think, after a short time? You have led such a roving, adventurous life on the open road, your experiences must have gotten into your blood more than you realize. Of course, the girls know it must be hard, but several of them are a little envious of you. Don't you remember you and your father told us that you planned to be an actress and follow your mother's profession? Surely the idea makes the present easier for you! When I am discouraged with myself, when I have failed in my duties as a Scout and when the girls are cross and Miss Frean annoyed and my uncle and aunt bored with me, I dream of the day when I am going to be a great artist. Then nothing really matters."

Tory Drew was in earnest and yet joking. Her companion laughed.

"Yes, Tory, but I am not so gifted a dreamer as you are. I sometimes wonder if I really do want to be an actress or if it is only my father's idea for me. He does not like my doing what I have to do, he only pretends, so much of his life has been just pretense. I have agreed with him because it was my mother's life and there seems nothing else. I would rather be a Scout Captain I sometimes think."

"Don't you wonder about your mother's family?" Tory asked. "You must wish to know their name and where they live. Miss Frean and I have decided you should appeal to them, if there is any way of finding out who they are. They would be sure to care for you and do something for you. You must be fourteen or fifteen and can't wait so much longer if you really want an education. One could never guess from the way you speak. Miss Frean thinks they must be people of good breeding, as it would account for so much that puzzles one in you. There, forgive me. I do recall that in 'Alice in the Looking-Glass' one is told not to make personal remarks. I have been doing nothing else in talking to you all afternoon."

"Oh, well, I have wanted you to, it has made these days so wonderful having another girl to talk things over with. Do you know Mr. Helm has asked Bob to stay on at the farm and work for him this winter and go to school? Bob is crazy to accept, although he declines to leave father and me."

Donna's pale cheeks flamed into two bright spots of color.

"I do know my mother's family name. Why should you think I did not? I have known since I was a small girl. There were letters and papers and odds and ends of jewelry and old photographs in a box that were kept for me. I used often to play with them by the hour when I was younger. They kept me amused when we traveled."

Tory was surprised into a moment of silence.

The September day was closing in purple and gold.

At a window Mrs. Helm appeared and waved a signal, suggesting the two girls return to the house. She was alone except for them and her cook and maid. Mr. Helm had gone away upon business, taking Mr. Dolliver with him. Katherine Helm soon after the fire had departed for Tom Courtenay's home in Lexington, insisting that her nerves were so dis-

turbed that she required diversion. Jane Helm had accompanied the Scout Captain, Girl Scouts, Tom and Donald, upon their trip to Mammoth Cave.

Tory and Donna arose slowly. There was no reason why they should hasten into the house and the late afternoon was enchanting.

"Then you have written your mother's family and they have declined to make friends?" Tory inquired. She was being frankly curious.

Donna shook her head.

"No, I have never communicated with them in any way. It was my mother's wish that I never should. I don't see why she was so bitter, for two or three of the letters are kind. I shall always respect her wish. Besides, if I should ever make friends with her family they would try to separate me from my father. I shall never leave him for any reason. Please tell me more of how I can become a Girl Scout. It is so much more important than talking of the past!"

The two companions were walking slowly down the hill. The ground had not been cleared and once or twice Tory stumbled. The adjoining field was covered with blue-grass and separated by a low stone fence.

"Suppose we cross over into the other field. It looks ever so much pleasanter. Thank fortune there are no cows. It is a confession I do not like to make, but I am desperately afraid of cows and dogs. The other girls haven't the slightest sympathy for me. I was not brought up in the country, and—oh, well, why try to explain our fear complexes?"

The stone fence was easily climbed. The two girls walked on more rapidly, not talking, but each one thinking of the other. If circumstances made it possible they were capable of a rare friendship.

There was no one else in sight or hearing. The evening quiet was settling on the countryside. Suddenly they stopped abruptly, Donna a little in advance of Tory.

Without the slightest warning of his approach a young bull was rushing toward them across the meadow with lowered head.

Tory felt an instant collapse of her nerve and energy. She was mortally ashamed, but her only impulse was to sink upon the ground, helpless and hopeless with fear.

She was startled by the sharpness of her companion's tone.

"Run as fast as possible, Tory. Keep calling for help."

Tory, without thinking, did as she was commanded. As she stumbled and ran she was under the impression that her companion was following. Their predicament was so absurd, and yet the danger was real. A few moments and she was over the fence that they had climbed a short time before.

Then she looked for Donna.

Immediately in front of the angry bull she beheld Donna, dancing as nimbly as upon the afternoon of her performance before the street crowd in the little town of Twin Mules.

She had removed the white woolen shawl that she had been wearing so constantly and was waving it in a bewildering fashion before the lowered head of the bull.

Tory was torn between admiration and terror and compunction. Donna had made her seek safety at the expense of her own peril. She might keep the bull from advancing so long as she could continue to worry and frustrate it, but when she wearied or when she turned to run, what chance had she not to be trampled? Surely no one had ever beheld so graceful a matador as the girl in the white cotton frock with the short, unbound gold hair and the woolen scarf!

As Tory marveled at the same time she was

calling for aid at the top of her lungs. Either the two men in the orchard who were gathering fruit heard her cries or else had seen what was occurring. Armed with two long poles with prongs at the end, they came charging up the hill.

Ten minutes later Donna's arm was about Tory and they were entering the house.

"It is absurd to make so much of nothing, Tory. It was probably ridiculous of us to be frightened. When one is in the farming country one has to go through such experiences. But whoever would have dreamed that I could use my skill as a circus performer in rescuing a Girl Scout? Aren't you a disgrace to the whole organization of Girl Scouts?"

And Donna's teasing laughter was gayer and happier than in many a long day.

CHAPTER XV

MAMMOTH CAVE

UPON the same afternoon of Donna's and Tory's hillside talk, the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing, their Captain, Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay alighted at the dilapidated little wooden depot at Cave City.

Part of the day's journey to the famous cave had been made in a long hike on the open road, the latter part by train. The trip through the cave would be sufficiently fatiguing, and although they had the night's rest before them, the travelers wished to arise fresh and rested at an early hour in the morning.

In planning their trip along the open road, there had been no thought of a visit to Mammoth Cave; as a matter of fact, Mr. Helm was responsible for a sudden decision.

"Surely it is not possible that you can be so near one of the greatest wonders of the world and make no effort to see it," he protested to Miss Frean. "Who knows when any one of you will return to Kentucky and

in later years one always regrets the opportunities one has missed! The man who has charge of the hotel near the Cave is an old acquaintance and if you decide upon the excursion I'll telegraph ahead and ask that he make you as comfortable as possible. I suppose Donald and Tom will be reliable escorts. If you desire the experiences of the open road the country about the cave is as interesting as in any other part of the state. My own opinion is you would make a very great mistake to miss it."

Now as the Scout Captain glanced about her she felt a little tremor, partly from excitement, partly from apprehension.

The town of Cave City was not inspiring.

A rickety and ancient Ford truck waited at the depot to bear the knapsacks and bags and the travelers who preferred to ride rather than walk to the Cave City hotel.

It was late in the afternoon, a chill wind had blown up and the autumn foliage that an hour before had been radiant with color and life was now shivering and shrinking and drifting into thick and whirling eddies.

The Scout Captain missed Tory Drew. She apologized to herself for her greater affection for Tory with the explanation that she

had known her before any other member of her Scout troop. She also had a deep friendship for Tory's bachelor uncle, Richard Fenton, and in their youth the affection between them had been greater than mere friendship. Moreover, Tory's ardent artist nature, her deep enthusiasms, her impetuous action, her wilfulness and sweetness had a peculiar hold on many people. But if Tory had not appeared strong enough for the strenuous trip through the cave she had not been sufficiently ill to cause the slightest uneasiness. She had only suffered from cold and fatigue after the night of excitement. Her latest enthusiasm, Donna Foster, was in much the same condition, so Tory would have the consolation of her companionship.

Miss Frean climbed into the truck, followed by the girls, except Ann Craig and Dorothy McClain, who preferred to accompany Tom and Donald.

The houses along the way were wooden structures devoid of paint and somewhat dilapidated. Cave City appeared to exist for the sake of the cave, as one occasionally sees a down-at-the-heels family brought into prominence by the possession of a genius in their midst. The lights in the windows were being

lighted and the Scout Captain became interested in the conversation of her girls.

"Do you know, I long to see Mammoth Cave and yet somehow dread descending into the bowels of the earth," Joan Peters remarked, speaking more directly to her intimate friend, Margaret Hale, yet including the others. "I wonder if any one else feels as I do?"

Margaret Hale, the calmest and best poised of the eight girls in her Patrol, laughed.

"Don't take our adventure so seriously, Joan. After all, there are many marvels upon the face of the earth that people manage to accept serenely. I suppose the cave is alarming in places. I have heard stories of its dark caverns, of its mysterious river where the fish are blind."

Teresa Peterson shivered and caught hold of the Scout Captain's hand.

"May I stay near you, Miss Frean, during the entire trip through the cave? Remember, everybody, I asked first. I heard such a gruesome story of the cave when I was a little girl. A man was lost from the rest of his party. He had no food with him, only a candle, but he divided the candle into three parts, deciding to eat a portion each day.

In three days he believed his friends would surely discover him. He had eaten the third piece of candle when the guide came back for him and he had been lost just three hours instead of three days."

The Scout Captain smiled, the girls laughed, but there was a certain sympathetic understanding in their laughter.

"Well, one does not have to depend entirely upon candles at the present time! I believe a portion of the cave is lighted by electricity. All I ask is, please let us go to bed early. We are to get up at six and start upon our trip through the cave at seven. I suppose there will be a few other people with us, but not a great number, as the tourist season is over."

As a matter of fact, there were no other travelers in their car except a middle-aged man who looked as if he might be a professor of science or mathematics, and a country woman too gayly dressed.

Louise Miller, who was interested in science, glanced at the man with interest. She was curious to know if he had come to Mammoth Cave to make a geological study of the strata of earth inside the cave. Louise possessed a curious ambition for a young girl; she was

intensely anxious to become a geologist. Her opportunities for study, however, were limited to her expeditions with the Girl Scouts and to the information the Scout Captain and the science teacher at the High School in Westhaven could bestow upon her. They advised her to read certain books, but as Louise's family was poor and she had no hope of going to college her outlook as a scientist was not a bright one at present. However, a girl's ambition is not easily crushed.

"Dinner will be served in half an hour," a southern voice drawled, as the Scout Captain and five of her Patrol entered the Cave City hotel.

"Well, I shall not object. Please tell Dorothy and Ann to come directly to their rooms as soon as they arrive. I want everybody to promise me to be in bed by nine o'clock. The cave is not far away, I believe, and this will give us time after dinner to walk over and stare into the opening if we like."

It was only eight o'clock, however, when the little party of friends returned to the hotel following a short walk after dinner. They had concluded to wait until the next day for their first view of the entrance to the Cave and had walked in the opposite direction.

They were climbing the steps of the hotel when Tom Courtenay remarked unexpectedly:

"Miss Frean, do you mind if Dorothy McClain sits out of doors and has a talk with me for half an hour or so? I promise to see that she comes up to her room by nine."

An instant the Scout Captain hesitated, then nodded her head in agreement. She was a little surprised by the request; Tom and Dorothy had been able to see each other at any time during the day. However, they had passed through an unusual experience together in the cabin in the mountains and had the right to an unusual friendship.

If the Scout Captain was surprised, Dorothy was more so, and a little bored as well, She was tired and wanted to go to bed. She could not imagine what confidence Tom Courtenay wished to pour into her ears. With six brothers she had been listening to their dreams and desires for as long as she could remember.

"Oh, very well, Tom, but please get my heavy coat. It is too cold outdoors with only my Scout jacket," she conceded, not very amiably.

Outside the hotel there was an effort at a garden. A few wooden benches were placed

beneath the trees to tempt the summer tourists. A few flower beds filled with straggling autumn flowers decorated the lawn.

Tom chose seats under an old tree, with the ground beneath littered with round corrugated balls large as green oranges. In the starlight the entire scene was softened and idealized.

Placing her hand to her lips, Dorothy was under the impression that she carefully concealed a yawn.

She was chagrined to discover Tom smiling down upon her. Dorothy's attitude toward him amused and annoyed Tom Courtenay. He was under the impression that he liked her because she was so straightforward and direct. This had been his conclusion in their ten days together in the mountain cabin, but occasionally the same characteristics were irritating. Any other young girl of his acquaintance would have shown pleasure at the prospect of a talk with him alone and under the present circumstances, especially as he really had something important to say.

"Sorry you are tired, Dorothy, I'll get through with what I want to talk about in a hurry. Jane Helm tells me that you were surprised I had never mentioned my secret ambition either to you or Tory in the days

we were in the cabin. We talked so intimately of so many things. The truth is I had promised my mother to think the whole situation over quietly and not to speak of it to any human being for a time. I am sure she would not object to my talking to you now. You are so soon to meet, I hope, in my own home."

Tom was speaking in his most charming and courteous manner, the manner that had impressed Dorothy. It was so unlike the awkwardness and self-consciousness of her brothers and their friends. Nevertheless, she frowned.

"No, it was not the question of your telling or not telling us, Tom. I was surprised to hear you wanted to be an actor. I was not only surprised, I was disappointed. It seems so childish and foolish of you to talk of giving up college and the opportunities you have in life just for a boy's fancy. I don't know why exactly, but I thought you were different from the other boys I know, more experienced and more mature. Yet no one of my Boy Scout friends would dream of being so reckless. It is different somehow with my brother Lance. I told you that Lance had gone abroad to study music and means to be a great pianist.

But Lance had no choice. He is a genius. But you, Tom Courtenay, you are not. You probably have not even a great deal of talent for acting. You have told me all your family have been lawyers and country gentlemen."

Tom Courtenay had thought of himself as a man and Dorothy McClain as a young girl to whom he could be kind, even patronizing if the situation demanded it. Now she was talking to him as if he were ten years younger.

He was angry, and yet after all he had invited the present lecture.

Tom stiffened and became sulky. Dorothy had known her own brothers to behave in the same fashion but somehow had believed Tom had more self-control. His attitude was superior and a little scornful.

Dorothy found herself flushing; she was glad of the cool night air that touched her hot cheeks and temples.

"Never mind, Dorothy, I did not ask your opinion upon what I plan to do with my future. I was only confiding the fact to you. I have enough to contend with in my own family. Suppose we do not speak of this again. There is something else I want to say that you may think more interesting and important."

Tom's manner grew more agreeable.

"It is about the Dollivers. A queer trio, aren't they? Have you ever beheld three human beings more unlike? The girl is refined and as much a lady as if she had been brought up in the most sheltered fashion. And yet what a life! The boy is a good enough kid, but he is dull and about as interesting as a farm horse, while Mr. Ignatius Dolliver is a great old mountebank. One does not know whether to admire him or to laugh at him. I wonder whether he is a Dickens character or first cousin to the Beloved Vagabond. In any case, I find myself liking him tremendously. I wish I could change places with the girl this winter and wander over the country in the gold-covered canvas wagon. Why in the name of all that's holy because I happen to have a father who is rich and a mother who is beautiful and fond of society must I be forced to lead a conventional life? I tell you I detest conventions, I detest society, I am bored with college and bored with having all the small things in life I want and none of the big."

Tom's fierceness was so unexpected and so unlike him that Dorothy became subdued.

"Yes, Tom, go on. What is it you wanted

to suggest about the Dollivers? They are interesting. Miss Frean declares that if she had the money she would like to take Donna with her to Westhaven. She is already to have Ann Craig of Mystery Valley, and she cannot be like the 'Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.' Besides, the girl, Donna, insists she will never leave her absurd father."

"Oh, well," Tom Courtenay defended, "perhaps he is not so absurd. It is a great mistake to make a pattern, Dorothy, and expect everybody to conform to it. This is one of the dangers of growing up in a small town as you have. You will have to be careful. I have talked a lot to Mr. Dolliver. One thing I have discovered, he is brave and kind and devoted. That is a good deal, isn't it? Well, at present he is down and out as far as money goes. I expect, except for the gold-covered canvas wagon and their old nag, five dollars would cover their worldly capital. And the winter is coming on and the girl isn't well enough for the life she must lead. Not that he has complained or begged, remember, I only dragged all this out of him. Now my scheme is to suggest that when we start off on our open road hike toward Lexington the gold-covered canvas wagon accom-

panies us. The Dollivers need not be near enough to our party to excite attention. I know Miss Frean would not stand for that, but they could move along reasonably close and we could find out now and then how they were making out. When they give one of their pathetic, tragic little shows we could stand around and pretend to be an enthusiastic audience. It would draw a crowd, a few interested spectators always can arouse a lot of curiosity and excitement in other people. When we reach home if all goes well and you make us the visit I am counting upon, let's give a benefit for them. It might set them up for the winter, give the girl Donna a chance to attend school. The Lexington Scouts would be tremendously interested in a Scout entertainment by a visiting Patrol. Then I will have a chance to show you what a mortal poor actor I am. One cheerful fact, I can't be any worse than you believe me. Mother is not going to be very enthusiastic over the Dollivers at first, and I am poor as a church mouse at present, having spent my entire summer's allowance. But no one can object to our benefit entertainment, and I am rather counting upon the girl who has spent her entire life in a circus wagon to give my

mother the shock of her life. She may not be so sure of the influence of heredity and environment, her favorite watchwords, after meeting Donna."

Dorothy gasped; accustomed to Tory Drew's sudden stimulating suggestions, she had not anticipated any such behavior from Tom Courtenay.

"Really, Tom, you take my breath away. We will have first to speak to Miss Frean and discuss the idea together. I hope you are not angry with me although I still believe what I said. Suppose we go back to the hotel. There is enough excitement ahead of us to-morrow. You don't think there is any danger in going through Mammoth Cave?"

Tom laughed.

"For Girl Scouts? I thought they were superior to all physical dangers, so remarkable is their prowess in hiking, swimming, signaling, fire building—there isn't time to repeat the entire list of their accomplishments."

Dorothy shook her head.

"Why should you think I meant danger for the Girl Scouts? I may have been fearful for their masculine escorts; but come on, let us go to bed and not quarrel any more to-night."

CHAPTER XVI

SCOUTING

THE procession inside the Cave was led by the guide. Behind him followed the college professor, then Tom Courtenay, Dorothy McClain, Louise Miller, Edith Linder, Joan Peters and Margaret Hale, the Scout Captain, Teresa, Evan Phillips, Ann Craig and Donald McClain, who brought up the rear. There were no tourists save their own party and the professor from the University of Louisville who had introduced himself as Professor Irwin.

The Girl Scouts and their Captain marveled at the underground wonders, but presently they began, in human fashion, to take them more for granted.

Tom Courtenay was in advance of the party, following the guide and the college professor. Close beside him was Dorothy, but there was little conversation between them.

The first part of the journey was uneventful, and they lunched gaily in a beautiful grotto.

The beginning of the second part of the journey was arduous. A narrow ledge of rock extended for a number of yards with sheer precipices on either side. One gazed down into complete darkness. If there were footholds in the rocks below there was no way of beholding them.

"Look straight ahead, watch where you are going and what you are doing. No danger," the guide instructed.

Several of the girls were nervous. Dorothy had no sensation of alarm. She was too calm and collected, yet too good a Scout not to obey instructions.

She walked more warily than before, forgetting Tom Courtenay's presence, forgetting their differences of the past twenty-four hours.

So intent was she upon watching each step that at the same instant she heard Tom Courtenay's agonized cry, "Dorothy!" she saw him slip over the ledge. He flung his arms forward, managing to clasp them about one of the stones in the pathway that had a slight abutment.

Immediately Dorothy crouched down. She placed her arms about him, under the armpits, clasping her hands so tight together her fingers dug into her palms.

Tom was slipping, his own grasp was too feeble, and the weight of his body was drawing him down. He would drag Dorothy with him; at present only the clasp of her arms like steel kept him from the blackness beneath.

"Let go," he commanded, without a trace of the boy in his face. Ordinarily Dorothy would have obeyed such a tone instinctively. Now she only held tighter. Not in vain had been her long athletic training. She had been playing tennis with her brothers, swimming and rowing since she was seven or eight years old. In the past two years her Scouting work had kept her in condition. No one with muscles less hard and responsive could have maintained such a grasp.

Dorothy felt no pain, no great fear, only an intense tenacity of purpose and a deadening ache in her body which seemed to increase her endurance.

Only a few seconds and yet so long!

The guide carried a rope knotted about his own waist. In a moment, with the assistance of Professor Irwin, he had the other end about Tom Courtenay. With no great effort the two men drew him back to his former foothold.

Louise Miller helped Dorothy arise.

Now that the danger was past she was whiter and more shaken than Tom himself.

"Please stop for a few moments, I am sorry to delay the procession, but I can't move on at once."

The guide was berating Tom Courtenay.

"See here, young fellow, if it hadn't been for that there Girl Scout, you would have cashed in your checks. I couldn't see you, I don't have eyes in the back of my head, but I've been noticing. You are one of these smart young fellows that don't have to take precautions like ordinary people. You've been through the cave so many times you think can't nothing happen. Gee, I have never had anybody lost or hurt since I have been guide these twenty years! Lucky thing you didn't spoil my record!"

Tom had sufficient self-possession to smile.

"Yes, it would have been hard luck for both of us!" There was nothing disagreeable or superior in his manner at present. His coolness and grace, his debonair air were not assumed, they were a part of his temperament and training.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, the trip through Mammoth Cave ended, the party of Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing with their Captain and two escorts were on the train returning to the Helm farm.

Dorothy was sitting beside the Scout Captain and Miss Frean's arm was about her. Neither one of them had discussed the nearly averted tragedy. Dorothy looked too tired and troubled.

One of her responsibilities as Scout Captain, Memory Frean believed, was to study the character of each one of the Girl Scouts with whom she was associated. She realized that although it was a relief to Tory Drew to pour forth her emotional excitement, Dorothy could not speak of the things that touched her until the first emotion had passed.

They both glanced up to see Tom Courtenay come into their train from the smoking car and walk down the aisle. Evidently he was looking for them.

He stopped and sat on the arm of the seat beside the Scout Captain.

"Will it crowd you too much if I sit here a few moments, Miss Frean? I want to say something to you and Dorothy that she probably would not allow me to say if we were alone. I am aware of the fact that I owe my life to her. Does one thank a person for a trifling matter like that? I don't suppose I can ever thank Dorothy, but she seems to me the best Scout I ever saw, the quickest

and coolest and bravest. Of course, under the circumstances I am prejudiced in her favor. I don't suppose the fact that I think she deserves the Golden Eaglet would be allowed to count for much. But, Dorothy, my life is more or less at your service. I mean if there is any request you feel you wish to make of me, I shall do what you ask."

Tom smiled and the seriousness departed from his face.

"We have been quarreling, Miss Frean, for the past twenty-four hours, whenever we had the chance. I have been as bumptious and disagreeable as possible. But I am not going to apologize at present, because Dorothy is perfectly capable of stating what she really thinks of me and I do not wish you to hear."

He leaned and looked persuasively at the Scout Captain.

"Promise me you will make us the visit in Lexington. Mother has written again insisting she wishes to know my new Scout friends. You won't disappoint us?"

"Tom Courtenay, do people always do what you wish?" Miss Frean inquired.

Dorothy was under the impression that Tom had won his cause.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

THE Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing and their Captain were hiking toward Lexington. They were passing through the most beautiful portion of the blue-grass region of the state.

Behind them crawled slowly the gold-covered canvas wagon.

Purposely keeping some little distance away so as to avoid making them conspicuous, nevertheless "The Dollivers" were actually a part of the Girl Scout pilgrimage along the open road.

Inside the canvas wagon were their sleeping tents and heavy equipment. Riding in the wagon with Mr. Dolliver and Donna was Tory Drew, while walking along the roadside with Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay was the third member of the Dolliver trio, the boy, Bob.

Unless she could make the journey by train or wagon Tory was not equal to the fatigue of the trip.

There had been no great difficulty in persuading the Scout Captain to agree to this temporary addition to their original party. She was interested in Donna and anxious to know something more of the girl's future opportunities before saying good-by to her, possibly forever. A few more days and their own summer holiday would be past, then home and school and the winter Scout work.

Sorry to be ill, notwithstanding, Tory was greatly enjoying her glimpse of the world from the seat of a wagon that served as a dwelling place and a storage warehouse for the necessary circus properties.

"So you would like to know when and how we built the wagon, Miss?" Mr. Dolliver inquired, looking greatly pleased with himself and his two girl passengers. "In a way the wagon wasn't never built, it's like Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin, it has 'just growed.' First it was simple like and the Missus and Bob and Donna and me only traveled by day and put up at different places for the night. We used to carry our cooking utensils and oil stove even in them days, since the Missus was as good a cook as she was a bareback rider. Then she died and kind of by degrees we began turning the old wagon into a home. Some-

times there wasn't much money to give for beds in places, and the beds wasn't much when you had paid for 'em. And sometimes on beautiful, warm, moonlight nights Donna useter say: 'Why do we want to sleep in stuffy little bedrooms when we've the wagon and the outdoors?' So Bob and I fixed up those side seats so they can be turned into beds and Donna made the curtain to divide the wagon into two parts when night comes on."

Mr. Dolliver flopped the reins on the back of his old horse. It was a mere gesture, the horse proceeded always at the gait that best pleased him, which was a mere snail's pace.

"Then Bob, he made the little shelves for Donna's books and give 'em to her for a Christmas gift. We have bought books when we had a dollar or two to spare and sometimes when we ain't had 'em to spare. Donna keeps her little trinkets on those shelves, the box with her mother's letters and pictures and whatnots. Maybe she might like to show 'em to you some day. Donna won't let me say it, but there's times lately when I think she ought to connect up someways with her mother's folks. She knows how I feel toward her, but I ain't selfish as maybe I look. She ain't so

well, and somehow, since meeting up with you Girl Scouts, I kin see better what she needs, a more regular life, you might say, and food and a education and friends of her own kind, not just Bob and me and the good fellows one meets on the open road. Now 'bout her helping with the show we was planning to give in Frankfort, the capital city of this here state. Can't you make her see she ain't strong enough? And if she was, she couldn't stand having the crowd staring as they always have done when she ain't minded so much. There's something awful close between my Donna and me. Most always we know what the other's thinking and feeling without a word. Suppose you ain't put any faith in her coming out to warn me the barn was going up in smoke, but Donna and me—well, we know, and it ain't likely it's anybody's business. I kin sense that Donna ain't never going to be the same about circus acting since she met you Girl Scouts and you have kind of, sort of, taken her in, as you might say."

The three travelers of the open road were seated upon the front seat of the gold-covered canvas wagom, Donna beside her foster father and Tory beside Donna.

Occasionally the two girls talked together

in low voices while Mr. Dolliver either ruminated or soliloquized.

Following his suggestion Donna brought her box of treasures to share their secret with her new friend.

"I would rather you would not read the letters, because I do not wish you to know the name of my mother's family. I am not going to turn to them in any case, so if father wants to get rid of me he will have to find some one else to look after me. I do want you to see my mother's picture and some other photographs."

Tory looked at the image of a young woman not unlike Donna herself, slender, refined and with a good deal of personal charm. Several of the pictures included a number of persons, perhaps groups of actors, as they suggested professional people.

"Here is my favorite photograph of my mother when she was seventeen and evidently taken with an intimate girl friend. You see they have written their first names and their ages upon the back of the picture, 'Mary and Patricia, 17 and 18.'"

Tory's romantic imagination was fired. In addition to the photographs, Donna showed her several notes to which only first names

were attached, two or three from the same Patricia. She also exhibited half a dozen old-fashioned trinkets, one of them a gold locket with the picture of the girl who appeared in the photograph.

A half hour before luncheon time, Tory climbed down from the wagon to walk for a mile or more with the Girl Scouts and to eat with them. She insisted that Donna join her, but Donna declined positively and finally.

"No, Bob and father and I always have our meals together, and I prefer to do the cooking. You need not worry about us. Mrs. Helm packed up a basket of provisions, nearly as large an amount of food as she bestowed on your party. We won't starve for a little while. And no matter what father may think, I am strong enough for our show at Frankfort. I am going to reassure him that I am not ashamed of what I have been doing all my life. If you like you and the other Girl Scouts *may* come to see me."

There was a bravado in the tone that failed to deceive Tory Drew. She possessed a temperament too responsive to other people's emotions to be easily deceived. Within the past few days she had learned to know the girl of the gold-covered canvas wagon more

intimately than she knew three or four members of her own Girl Scout Patrol, because there was a deeper law of attraction between them.

Later, as Tory marched along the open road beside Dorothy McClain she continued to think of the other girl. What could be done to help her? As Girl Scouts they owed a duty to less fortunate persons. To turn her back upon Donna Foster within a short time and trust to chance to render aid, did not appeal either to Tory's sense of the dramatic or to her kindness of spirit.

"What is it you are dreaming about, Tory?" Dorothy finally inquired. "You are not already tired out?"

"Gracious, no! I was thinking how many times I miss 'Doing a Good Turn Daily' and if it were not possible to do big things now and then which help to cover up one's many lapses from grace?"

"Yes. Well, what is it you *really* have upon your mind?" her companion continued, knowing from long experience the fashion in which Tory approached a subject.

Tory smiled.

The line was moving slowly and in double formation, allowing opportunity for conversation and observation of the beautiful pastoral

land about them, a country that seemed to follow the Bible description of "flowing with milk and honey."

"To be exact, Dorothy, since you demand it, I was thinking of what we could do within the next few days to raise money for 'The Dollivers.' We have had an expensive holiday, none of us is rich, and the small sums we could give them, provided they would accept our gift, would in no way solve their dilemma. You see, I want to provide for Donna's future."

This time it was Dorothy who smiled.

"How like you, Tory Drew! Now I have been thinking that it would be a thing to remember with pleasure if we could arrange for Donna to have a few months' rest and grow strong or a winter at school. You calmly state that you desire to arrange for her future. A large order!"

"Yes, but what I actually meant was more what you said, my dear. You see, Dorothy, you and I make a happy combination of fancy and fact. Well, what shall we do? Have you a plan by which we can rub Aladdin's lamp?"

Tory spoke jestingly. She had no thought of any definite answer and knew her companion was not given to idle speculation.

"Yes, I have. The idea is not mine and I am afraid is not going to work out. The other evening Tom Courtenay told me that he too had developed a surprising interest in our open road acquaintances. I think he is anxious to befriend Donna but is really more intrigued by Mr. Ignatius Dolliver. He told me to discuss his proposal with Miss Frean and our Patrol. When we arrive in Lexington he wished to give an entertainment, a kind of vaudeville it seemed to me, for the benefit of the 'Dollivers.' We were to give Girl Scout exhibitions, he believes the Scout troops in Lexington will be curious to find out if we have accomplishments differing from their own. Then he planned to ask Evan Phillips to dance and Donna if she was well enough. But the glory of the entertainment, I think, was to be a one-act play in the form of a monologue that Tom wished to deliver. Apart from more important reasons he is determined to convince me that he has more dramatic talent than I think he has. Of course, I don't know anything about it, really, and am not competent to judge in any event, but I told Tom he seemed to me the last person in the world suited to the stage. He was angry. We have made friends and he appears willing

to forget how I annoyed him in view of what almost happened at Mammoth Cave."

Tory's dark eyes widened with mirth and appreciation.

"Yes, I should think under the circumstances Tom might forgive even your doubting his great dramatic gifts. Your opinion was without any special foundation. I presume you judge by his manner and appearance. Tom does look more like an agreeable young society fellow with unusually good manners and breeding. You would have him hollow eyed and histrionic. Not that I speak from any experience, but most actors nowadays seem to play society parts. I should love to see Tom make the attempt, apart from the money we might earn for the 'Dollivers.' But as we are to be in Lexington only thirty-six hours or less, I don't see how things can be managed."

"Neither do I," Dorothy answered a little wistfully, "and I *am* sorry. I would like to take back what I said to Tom, if I could truthfully alter my opinion. You know, I can't pretend very successfully. As soon as lunch is over, suppose we talk to him! Perhaps he can make arrangements after all! Not that we yet have asked Miss Frean's consent."

When luncheon was over Tom, Dorothy and Tory went to be alone to the shelter of a large tree by the roadside. Tom Courtenay considered the situation thoughtfully.

"No, don't you see it is altogether out of the question? You will be in Lexington only one evening. What time would I have for making preparations beforehand? I would have to secure a theatre and stir up an audience. I would not have our entertainment a frost. My mother would never be willing not to have you with her the one evening you are our guests. Pity you can't stay longer—almost no visit at all! I shall scarcely have time to show you 'The Lindens.' I wish, Tory, there was something we could do for 'The Dollivers' that would amount to something. They are a great trio!"

Tom Courtenay was stretched out full length on the grass at the feet of the two girls. Upon the opposite side of the road a few yards back, the gold-covered canvas wagon had halted. On an overturned log Donna Foster and her father sat talking, while Bob was leading away the horse for water.

There was an air of unconscious dejection in the two figures as if they were taking counsel together in a forlorn cause.

Donna looked delicate and drooping as a wayside flower too long exposed to the heat and dust of the road.

Under his breath Tom whistled softly, Tory sighed and Dorothy McClain frowned.

Suddenly Tom sat upright.

"We shall be in Frankfort by noon tomorrow. Do the 'Dollivers' plan to give one of their outdoor circus performances there?"

Tory nodded.

"Donna insists upon it, although Mr. Dolliver declares she is not well enough, but I am afraid it will be necessary, for their finances are perilously low."

"Well, I can relieve Donna if need be and if one of you girls will consent to dance with me. Now don't agitate yourselves. No one is to know who we are. The dance is by Pierrot and Pierrette and we wear white masks. I can secure the costumes and the masks when we reach Frankfort and no one will be the wiser. It would be great sport and who knows we might make such a success money will pour down upon the 'Dollivers' in a silver flood."

"Sounds like a pleasant fantasy, Tom, but not a reality," Tory Drew answered. "Who do you suppose could appear with you in an

impromptu dance, provided Miss Frean would give her consent, and that is more than doubtful?"

Unexpectedly Dorothy turned ally.

She had been astounded by Tom's proposal. Actually in the days at the cabin she had been thinking of him as nearly grown. Now each hour she grew to know him better he seemed more a boy. He no longer appeared older than Donald, although in fact he was more than a year older. At the present moment he was in earnest about wishing to be of use to the "Dollivers", but was also delighted with the idea of dancing incognito before a crowd, many of whom might be his friends or acquaintances, who would be shocked and displeased to discover his identity.

"Evan Phillips *could* dance with you, Tom, if she is willing. You know she is a marvel. Remember how she used to dance in the woods during the summer of 'The Girl Scouts in Beechwood Forest'? She intends to be a professional dancer. Her mother is a teacher and Evan has been studying since she was a little girl. Of course Miss Frean might not agree, but suppose we ask Evan first?" Dorothy suggested.

Five minutes after Evan Phillips joined the small group.

"Why, yes, I would dearly love it!" she answered, as soon as Tory made her understand what was desired. "I have been yearning to dance before an audience without anyone knowing me, so as to test myself. I am sure mother would not object; she knows I plan to be a professional dancer and is as anxious as I am that I shall be successful. This is for the benefit of some one who needs help. I suppose the Girl Scouts of my own Patrol would be in the audience as unknown and unrecognized chaperons in case Miss Frean is willing. We could practice together to-night after dinner, Mr. Courtenay?"

The winning over of the Scout Captain was not easily accomplished, but she finally gave her consent, and the *pas de deux* was long talked about by those who were fortunate enough to be spectators.

They danced the immortal story of Pierrot and Pierrette, representing in their dancing, the friendship, the quarrel, the parting and the reconciliation.

Not a great sum of money was realized, but it was a memorable event in the lives of Tom and Evan, and the Dollivers were grateful for their kindness.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUT OF THE PAST

"THE LINDENS" was a place of an entirely different character from the Helm farm. The house had been built within the past few years, but followed an old Colonial model and was in the midst of an estate of a thousand acres.

Mr. Courtenay, Tom's father, had made a large fortune in tobacco; the tobacco fields were not near. The house was in the center of an ample lawn covered with linden trees. A long avenue of the same trees led to the broad white doorway.

The Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing and their Captain had been guests at "The Lindens" since early morning. They had been driven about the estate and through the heart of Lexington. They had been entertained at luncheon by the half dozen Girl Scout troops.

At present it was four o'clock in the afternoon and the eight Girl Scouts and Jane Helm were assembled in Mrs. Courtenay's large upstairs sitting-room waiting for afternoon

tea to be served Patricia Courtenay was seated cross-legged on a cushion demanding Scout information from Margaret Hale, whose younger sisters were Junior Scouts. She was therefore supposed to possess the necessary information.

Miss Frean had gone to her bedroom to rest for half an hour. Mrs. Courtenay was giving orders with regard to an informal dance for the Girl Scouts at eight o'clock of the same evening. Donald McClain and Tom Courtenay and Katherine Helm were in town and would not return until dinner time.

"Well, I am sorry we did not make more money for the 'Dollivers' the other day, but I am glad you thought our dance a success! Miss Frean seems to feel we did not disgrace ourselves after all, particularly as no one guessed who we were," Evan Phillips remarked, leaning back in a soft blue velvet chair and clasping her hands behind her head. She was speaking directly to Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain who were near by.

Tory nodded.

"Yes, but the 'Dollivers' think fifty dollars a great deal of money for a single outdoor performance! Donna confided to me that it was five times as much as they make ordi-

narily. However, I am afraid fifty dollars will not provide for her future or even arrange to give her a winter at school."

Dorothy spoke in a low, confidential tone.

"Tom Courtenay hopes his mother may be interested in Donna and will help. He has persuaded her to ask Donna here to tea with us this afternoon."

At this instant the door opened and Mrs. Courtenay came into her sitting-room. She and her son were alike, the same dark eyes and hair, the same charming air of courtesy and breeding.

"Has the little girl of the gold-covered canvas wagon arrived?" she inquired, looking around the room. "I am not in the habit of having so many girl visitors at once and I cannot distinguish you at the first glance."

"No," Tory replied, as usual acting as spokesman for her Scout Patrol, "but she surely will be here any moment. She may have had difficulty in finding her way."

"Oh, no, Tom sent a car for her, but I think we will wait another quarter of an hour for tea—"

A shy knock on the door interrupted Mrs. Courtenay. Mrs. Courtenay herself opened the door to Donna Foster.

The young girl stood outside, hesitating.

She wore a costume the Girl Scouts had never seen. In fact, Donna had made part of it since the arrival of the gold-covered canvas wagon in Lexington.

The dress was of cheap material but of a deep and lovely shade of red. She wore a shabby black cape and a small red turban of the same material as her dress. Her face was white and her lips scarlet.

She put out her hand and Mrs. Courtenay drew her in. Then the woman and girl stood staring silently at each other.

Their manner was so strange, their expressions so odd, that the Girl Scouts in the room, Jane and Patricia Courtenay as well, were surprised and puzzled.

Mrs. Courtenay soon recovered her self-possession.

"I am glad to meet another one of Tom's new friends," she remarked.

The newcomer shook her head.

"I am not one of your son's friends. My father and brother and I are outdoor circus performers. Your son has been very kind."

"So I have been told. Suppose you sit down and I'll have tea brought in."

Notwithstanding the fact that they were

feasting on the famous beaten biscuit of Kentucky and marvelous jams, Tory Drew and Dorothy McClain gave especial attention to the impression that Donna Foster was making upon Mrs. Courtenay. They could obtain but scant satisfaction.

Mrs. Courtenay was busy in serving her guests. Donna Foster sat pale and silent and Tory thought singularly ill at ease.

She answered the questions of the Girl Scouts in monosyllables. Whenever no one was addressing her directly, her gaze was fastened upon a particular corner of the room. For what reason Tory was impatient to find out. Why was Donna not frank and natural and wistful as she always had thought her?

A telephone message forced Mrs. Courtenay to leave the room.

The instant she had gone, without a word, Donna Foster arose quietly and walked across the long, lovely room toward the corner by a window.

Impelled by curiosity and annoyed by Donna's peculiar behavior, Tory Drew followed. She felt an impulse to scold and warn the girl of the gold-covered canvas wagon. She was too wise in reality to make Donna either more unhappy or self-conscious.

In the corner of the room by the window she saw her staring at an ordinary object, a framed photograph that hung upon the wall.

Donna had been ill.

Tory believed that the excitement of the visit and the fact that she may never have entered so beautiful an apartment before or met so charming a woman as Mrs. Courtenay had stimulated or fatigued her too greatly. Under the impression that Donna was about to faint, she put her arm quickly about her. Donna had turned even whiter than before. Her nostrils were twitching and the bright color had vanished from her lips.

"You are ill, don't you think you had best sit down? No, let me take you into another room. You will feel better alone," Tory suggested, aware that the other Girl Scouts and Patricia Courtenay were gazing at them curiously.

Mrs. Courtenay's bedroom adjoined her sitting-room and the door, only a few feet away, chanced to be open.

Without waiting to ask their hostess' permission, Tory led the other girl into this room.

She seemed glad enough to drop silently into a large chair.

"Be perfectly quiet, I'll get you some water

and then tell Mrs. Courtenay," Tory added and disappeared for a moment.

When she returned she found that Donna was standing before Mrs. Courtenay's dressing table, again staring fixedly before her.

Tory became more seriously annoyed, even a little frightened.

Mrs. Courtenay's dressing table was of mahogany and filled with silver toilet articles, with framed photographs of her husband and children and intimate friends.

Nevertheless Tory's gaze was impelled to follow her companion's.

Then she too turned a shade whiter and caught at Donna's arm. Donna was leaning forward, her eyes upon an old-fashioned picture of two girls in a silver frame. The photograph was the same that Tory had seen in Donna Foster's collection of her own mother's girlhood possessions.

"You recognize the photograph, don't you, Tory? I am not dreaming. Tom Courtenay's mother is my mother's girlhood friend. When I first came into the room I thought I had seen her somewhere before. I was bewildered and I am afraid I behaved strangely. Then afterwards I saw a picture of my mother upon the sitting-room wall. I

could not be sure until I went near to look. What must I do? Shall I tell Mrs. Courtenay? Will she be glad or sorry to know me?"

Tory Drew had no opportunity to reply.

Both girls heard the sweep of soft silk skirts and Mrs. Courtenay held out her hands to the girl of the gold-covered canvas wagon.

"My dear, is it really true? You are Mary Burton's daughter? Tom told me a little of your history. And Mary did marry an actor and her family never received her again. I never saw her afterwards. Are you sure you are not attempting to deceive me? What have you to gain? It all seems so improbable, so impossible, our meeting in this way!"

Evidently Mrs. Courtenay was repenting her first enthusiasm. Tory felt an extraordinary resentment, as if she were being doubted and not her companion.

Donna faced the situation more quietly.

"I don't wonder you cannot believe me, Mrs. Courtenay. I can scarcely believe myself that you are my mother's old friend. But I have been looking at your picture for so many years. Do you by any chance recall giving my mother a locket with a picture of you inside? If you do, I think you will no longer doubt me. I am wearing the locket

inside my dress. I don't know why I put it on to-day, except, I felt I wanted to wear something of hers."

"My dear, I never really distrusted you. I have a locket exactly like yours. Your mother and I gave them to each other when we were eighteen, our birthdays were only a week apart."

Leaving Mrs. Courtenay and Donna together, Tory stole quietly out of the room. Neither one of them paid the least attention to her departure.

"Please come with me to Miss Frean's room. I have something to tell you," Tory whispered to Dorothy McClain.

The two girls sat upon the edge of the Scout Captain's bed, while Tory related the dramatic story.

"It makes a wonderful climax for our summer's holiday, does it not, Memory Frean? Now I suppose Mrs. Courtenay will adopt Donna Foster and she will be happy ever after."

Tory rose and crossed over to the open window.

"To-morrow we take the train for home, and so ends our pilgrimage along the open road."

At noon upon the following day the Girl Scouts and Miss Frean left for the East. Delegations from Scout troops came to the depot to say farewell; nevertheless Tom Courtenay managed a five minutes' conversation alone with Dorothy McClain and Tory Drew. They were about to climb the steps into the train.

"Donna Foster will stay with us for the winter and go to school, mother has persuaded her that the Princess Pat needs a companion. Best of all, I have found an occupation for Mr. Ignatius Dolliver. A circus is to be in winter quarters near here and Mr. Dolliver to be employed by them. In consequence he feels like Napoleon. So you see what the Girl Scouts of the Eagle's Wing have accomplished."

Tory shook hands and ran up the steps into the vestibule of the car.

Dorothy lingered an instant longer.

"Not the Girl Scouts alone; I think Tom Courtenay is largely responsible. Thank you for many favors and good-by."

Dorothy ascended the first step as the train was slowly moving off.

"It is not good-by, I'll see you next Christmas in Westhaven!"

Then Tom Courtenay moved away.